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UNRAVELLED CONVICTIONS;

OR,

“MY ROAD TO FAITH.”

BY

A CONVERT.



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PREFACE.

It is eight months since I began to write the following pages, and now that the time has come for, as it were, finally closing them, I am sorry; for my self-imposed task, though distracting, has always been pleasant. I have purposely delayed its completion, for there has not been a week that has not brought with it the strengthening, or clearing up, of some conviction, and I know that as soon as I shall have made the fair copy in this book, quantities of fresh ideas and definitions will crowd upon me. If such be the case, it must be, and the only thing I must bear in mind in after days (if the Paper is to be of any interest to me), is that what is written below is but the expression of my feelings and convictions up to November 1868.

Did I say, I had written the expression of my feelings and convictions? Indeed I feel it to be no such thing—though when I began, and in every line I have written since, that object has been present to me. As I at last laid down my pen, I almost wished that I had never made the attempt, for one only finds by experience how feeble are one's powers of expression, once it comes to drawing out and laying clear anything that relates to the mystical and spiritual side of one's nature. All I have written is true, but how unsatisfying! To every distinct word that I write I am conscious of a gigantic background of vague mystery, telling to an untold degree on my inner convictions, but impossible to draw out. Many with

greater talent for expression could, doubtless, have made clear more of their inner workings than I have.

I do not regret my eight months' desultory work, for though I have benefited myself but little, that little is something. *All* within me was dishevelled at starting; now I have, at least, unravelled the net-work of my convictions, and I do not feel quite such a helpless and unhandy mass of mere *impressions* as I did on setting out. I feel I have something to start from, though I own that the dishevelled impressions which remain are enough to choke me.

I am conscious of a want of method and sequence in this unravelling Paper of mine. With a view to counteracting this and making it more handy, I have drawn up a sort of abstract of its contents, which I will set down as follows:—

I open my subject by laying down as my firm conviction a belief that truth is a city so set on a hill that it cannot be hid; and that our knowledge of things unseen though finite was revealed definitely, and is meant to be definite, and I say that on these two convictions and beliefs all others hinge. I then proceed to trace the first beginnings of my journey towards the Catholic Church; how from a sense of Her importance and unity I was led to a sense of Her harmony and loveliness, till the system of Christianity, as displayed by Her, for the first time in my life filled my soul. Then, still in the same prelude, I lay the Catholic Church before me, as described by Herself and as she claims to be—*i.e.*, as the great and one repository of Truth under the ceaseless and unerring guidance of the Holy Ghost; and as the instrument of God's priceless gifts. Having laid Her before me in this light, I ask why these claims should not be true, and whether such a system does not fit into every one's very ideas of what the Divine Mercy would have chosen for the health and comfort of His faithful ones. I now proceed to examine the actual reasons of my Faith under four heads.

1. The necessity of a Rule of Faith, and the insufficiency of all but the Catholic Rule.
2. The spirit of Holy Writ, together with certain distinct passages found in it.
3. The writings of the Early Fathers.
4. The History of the Church.

1st. I begin by stating my ideas of the qualifications for the true Rule of Faith, which I consider should be uninfluenced by times or circumstances of any kind, and should be grand enough to fill the deepest mind, while it is simple enough for a very child to understand. I number the Rules of Faith outside the Catholic Church at three: Private Inspiration, Antiquity, and the Bible. After making slight mention of the first, and reserving the second for future consideration, I pass on to the third; which I object to, as not living enough, and not definite enough. To help myself I suppose the Catholic Church never to have existed, and try to picture to myself what would have been the History of Christianity with the Bible privately interpreted as its sole Rule of Faith!

2d. Under this head I look at the History of the belief in God from the first ages as revealed in Holy Writ. After tracing it up to the Advent of Jesus Christ, I draw parallel plans of the History of Christianity, as viewed on one hand by Protestants, and on the other by Catholics, and try to judge which of the two is most like the fulfilment and continuation of what has gone before. I then examine more detailedly all the passages in Scripture relating to the era succeeding Christ's Advent. First the Prophecies, and in them I find that era described as one of Peace and Security, Judgment and Justice, Holiness and Righteousness, Beauty and Truth. Turning to the later revelation I find the same drift, but more enlarged on. The chief characteristics of Christ's Church seem to be that she is one: that Truth has been established in her to be handed down: that the Spirit of Truth dwells in Her for

ever: that she is established and firm: and that special gifts and graces are lodged in Her. I end by owning that I do not know whether these passages would have led me to the Catholic Church had I known nothing about Her, but that knowing as much about Her as I do, they wonderfully apply.

3d. Under this head I examine the Writings of the Fathers. I ask myself two questions:—1st. Was the Church of the Fathers the same as that of the Apostles? I answer, Yes. In the second century every Catholic doctrine was established, and viewed in the light of Heaven or Earth, I do not see how they could have sprung up unbeknown. 2d. I ask myself:—Was the Church of the Fathers the same as the Catholic Church of to-day? and again I say, Yes. Unless the Church of the Fathers (whose chief attribute seems to have been that it could not die) died noiselessly, it can only be found existing in the Catholic Church. All is easy if we can accept the idea of the development of doctrine.

4th. I start by stating my belief that the Catholic Church is of no human organisation, so my main purpose under this head is to judge, by Her history, to which of the two supernatural agencies, good or evil, she can be attributed. I first view the History of Christianity as it has been in the broad, and ask myself if it is most *likely* that the Roman Catholic Church should have been the agent of Christ or of His Enemy? Then I proceed to examine the actual good and bad that has existed in, and resulted from, the Church. 1st. I examine the bad:—while admitting every abuse or corruption *possible*, I deny that any abuse or corruption has formed or deformed any one of the Church's doctrines. 2d. I examine the good:—I maintain that it is Christ's battles that the Church has always fought, and without Her His Holy Faith would not have triumphed as it has. Passing on to the holiness of individuals, I maintain that holiness has existed, and can exist, in the Church, of a kind and to a degree unknown outside.

There is one thing I must say before I proceed with the body of this Paper, ever bearing in mind that it is my *own* convictions that I am drawing out for my own benefit. I have purposely never referred to any book, except when I have had to make an extract. I do not deny that much contained in the following pages may be unconsciously drawn from books that I have read, but only so far as it has soaked into me, till it has become part of myself. Is it not our object in reading to learn from others what we cannot make clear to ourselves ?

November 16th, 1868.

My object in writing this Paper is to grasp my convictions while I can. It is no easy matter for me to grasp them sufficiently to put words to them, for they are as yet but very immatured, but I do not wish to lose any time before trying to lay before myself (for it is only for myself that I am writing) what I believe, and why I believe, for I cannot be sure of any but the present moment, and these convictions, instead of maturing themselves and growing stronger, may, from two causes, vanish altogether. Either they may yield before superior light (if so, these pages will be only retrospectively interesting to me), or else they may lose themselves in a great darkness, for is it not possible that if these convictions are true, and I am playing with the truth, and asking God, as it were, to bide my time, He may see fit to take His light from me, and cast me into outer darkness ?

It was a little more than four years ago (I am writing these words in March 1868) that I first gave a thought to the Catholic Church. She flashed suddenly on me. I am far from putting myself among the number of those who are, what is called, suddenly converted, for I can see that the way in which the existence, the beauty, the majesty, the completeness of the Catholic Church flashed on me, was the most natural thing possible. I was without religion, for religion had never taken hold of me, and I suppose that my soul, unknown to myself, thirsted for something to fill it, so that when the covering was removed from my eyes, she flew to, and grasped, and loved the first thing she saw: so that the fact that the Catholic Faith thus suddenly seized me does not bear, and never has borne, any weight with me as an argument in favour of its truth, and I

ground all my belief in the Church on my subsequent search after truth. However, how can I help saying at this point of what I am writing, that if the Catholic Faith is the true Christian Faith (and millions and millions have held it to be so), I can never cease to praise the most Highest on my knees, and to worship His marvellous loving-kindness and tender mercy in having so ruled my life, atom as I am in an atom of Creation, that when He saw fit to remove the veil from my eyes, they fell on and grasped the Truth. At Paris, the first Catholic place I stayed in, there came over me a strong sense of the importance of the Church as a means of good, or as a means of evil; but I hardly know when was the beginning of a certain vague idea, which has ruled my life ever since, that this vast instrument of evil (for such I had always believed it to be) might, after all, be an instrument of good.* It was also at Paris that there came to me an appreciation of the unity of the Church, quite independent of any religious feeling. I remember thinking how isolated England was in her Faith from every other country, whereas while I was going over the Cathedral of Notre Dame, I felt as if I were on the threshold of Rome. As I travelled south through Catholic countries, a feeling of comfort came over me, and something filled my soul which made me aware how empty it had been before. I felt as if Jesus Christ had not quite left the earth, and feeling this, I began for the first time to love Him, and I may say to believe in Him, for though I had never thought enough about Him to really disbelieve in Him, I did so practically, for He had never existed to me. As a child I remember distinctly suffering from a want of connection between Heaven and Earth, and I actually wished that I had been a Jew in the times before Christ, when God's people were so evidently under His guidance, whereas I felt

* It seems strange to me as I look back on those early and totally irreligious years of my life, that the only matter connected with religion about which I seem to have had any personal and individual feeling, was a strange, bitter, abusive hatred of the Catholic Church. As far back as I can trace, and so long as I said my prayers at all, I always inserted a special clause in them, thanking God that I was not a Catholic. At one time of my life indeed, my prayers took the form of asking that the Catholic Religion might fall! I have it written down at the time.

that since He came on earth, all connection, all intercourse (so to speak) with Heaven had ceased. When I look back on my life before I went to Rome in the Autumn of 1863, I feel that the spirit of it—that which made it what it was—was the feeling at starting of being isolated from the Creator. He had indeed made us and saved us, I felt, but since He had saved us He had left us. Thus much I have said to show why the Catholic Faith should have seized on my newly-awakened sense of Religion, nay, should itself have awakened it. Suddenly God filled everything to me. I never could forget Him again! All fragmentary connection and intercourse between Him and His people had, I now found, developed into a never-dying continuous union. I jumped at the conclusion at once, unhesitatingly, that the Catholic Church was the infallible oracle of God. I believed blindly and by impulse all that she taught, simply because she taught it, and being utterly ignorant of her teaching, I was ready to believe many things that she never has taught, and never can teach. This state of blind faith in her did not last after I left Rome. For four years now I have, by a very different process, been working my way up to it again, nor do I know whether my present faith in her (entire as it is to all intents and purposes) equals what it was then.

Though I have not acted on, or based my belief on, the impulsive convictions of those hot-headed months, and have tried to argue without prejudice or bias, one marked feature has been given to all my subsequent search for Truth. The solution has been given me before the proposal of the question. That is to say, that when I returned to England and plunged into my life, with all the difficulties which every one who lives must meet in some form or other, I had a probable solution ready to apply to every successive stage of the difficulty. If it fitted, well and good, and somehow it always has fitted. Thus the whole argument presents itself to me in a form in which I dare say it does not present itself to the most of those who follow this search, and fight this fight, but which would not, as I see it, lead the less to Truth if honestly pursued. Instead of the main question to be applied to everything and argued from, being

“What is Truth ?”—it is with me, “Why should not *this* be true ?” Why not, indeed ? If it is Truth, is it not a great, a stupendous truth, worthy of Divine origin ?

So now to look briefly at this great Truth or Untruth, whichever it may be, and see what are its claims. This Catholic Church is (so she claims) the living voice of God on earth. He no longer sends Lawgivers, Priests, and Prophets as His messengers when they are needed, for He has instead set on earth a strange, a great, a mystical Power, through which He, in the Third Person of His Trinity, speaks, and will speak till our system ends. The Truth, as He delivered It to the Apostles, is kept and handed down to us, untouched, by this power. She sits there, calm and patient, age after age, while earnest, honest souls are struggling after Truth, speaking with the authority of God to those who will hear her, and ready with a solution to every difficulty for those who will receive it. Into Her keeping, and Hers alone, were committed those precious dearly-bought means of grace, by which Jesus Christ’s Atonement is perpetuated to us, and by which He still lives amongst us. This is how I understand the Catholic Church.

Well, taking the truth of Christianity as a starting point—for I write as a Christian, I am a Christian, I must be one, I can be nothing else ; no most overwhelming counter-argument or proof (and has such been ever found ?) could shake my belief in Christ. It rests on something mysterious, quite beyond and above the region of argument. Such belief, which I share with so many millions, if not a reality, must be some terrible form of madness. If not Truth, my whole life is a dream and a lie, from which I shall have a ghastly awakening some day—so taking, as I said, the Life, Death, and Sacrifice of the God-man, Jesus Christ, as a given starting point, the Catholic Church, such as she claims to be, comes to me as the *natural result* of that Life and Death. While it does not weaken, but rather strengthens, the reality of the great change which took place in the fate and state of the world 1800 years ago, it seems to fulfil the past as well. Viewing Christianity as a believer in the Catholic faith, that abrupt change which, as I said, took place in the whole

nature of our being 1800 years ago, loses half its abruptness, and the whole of our system comes before me as linked together in a graduated chain, developing towards its end. I said above, that to me the main difficulty of the abrupt change lay in God having formerly evidently governed the earth, and always sent help and guidance when help and guidance were needed ; and having, after things had worked up to the grand Fulfilment of Law and Prophecy, left His people to take care of themselves.

I often used to wonder why that fulfilment had come in the middle of our time, instead of at the beginning or end ; for though I felt that the condition and position of mankind *was* improved since Christ died, I wondered why it *was* so, or should be so, for He had died for past as well as future generations. We were told, it is true, that since His death the Holy Ghost had been specially sent—but in what way ? Had He not, together with the other Persons of the Trinity, been from all Eternity ? Had He not been with man, as a help and guide, from the beginning ; generally aiding him in secret, and in a way known to none but man himself, and also sometimes especially, as in the case of the Prophets and other inspired writers ?

True, the Second Person had been from all Eternity, and yet came to us, but then any one could see how *He* was specially revealed. I never reasoned thus in old days ; no, of so little importance had the mission of the Holy Ghost appeared to me, that it never once occurred to me to ask what was the real meaning of the Day of Pentecost, or of the promises of His Advent in St. John's Gospel, xiv., xv., xvi. The possibility of the Third Person having been as specially revealed as the Second 1800 years ago, never entered my mind. By the time I thought of asking such questions as I have above, the answer was ready, and wonderfully applied. It was a great day to me when the Catholic Church and Faith came to me as the *result* of the Death of Christ, the development of the fulfilment of Prophecy. The good Samaritan had not, I discovered, after having healed the robbed man's wounds, left him to find his way home as best he might. No, He had taken him to the inn, and had left him in charge of some one who would look after him. He had com-

manded that his wounds should be tended, that never mind how often they re-opened, they should be healed—and He had left the means of doing this. All this being done, He had gone away with the promise that He would come again. Jesus Christ did not leave the world to get on as it could till His return; He did not leave it more helpless than before—He did not leave us desolate and comfortless. He, our Lord, died to save us. He went up on high. He left His perfect doctrine to His Apostles, to be handed down by them, under the unfailing guardianship of God the Holy Ghost, Who Christ promised should come in His stead, and Who did come on the Day of Pentecost, to dwell with the Apostles and their successors to the end. It was not only the *possibility* of salvation that was bought by the precious Death on the Cross, but also the *means* of salvation, the Sacraments, and these Christ gave to His Church, wherewith our ever-opening wounds might be healed again and again, until He came back to us.

Why should not this be? It seems so fit, so natural, even if this were an entirely visionary view of Christianity. There is a power which claims to be and do all this; why should not God have made it so? Why not? Is it in these days that any Christian can say that a guardian of Christ's truth is unneeded? Has no Christian ever wondered, even while believing, why it is that he does believe? Has he never felt the want of a centre of truth and unity on which to fix, and by which to *test* his vague uncertain beliefs? Has no one watched with a deep *personal* interest all the great good souls who are groping after truth, each one arriving at a different end? And has it never entered his head that there can be but one truth, and that ninety-nine out of each hundred must have groped their way to untruth, if, indeed, the hundredth have reached the Truth? And has he never turned to Heaven and cried for the one flash of light which is all that would be needful to make the way of Truth plain to all those grand struggling souls, and asked almost bitterly why God has given to man no means of knowing what is Truth? What if God, in His infinite tender mercy, had granted that desire long before there was any need for its utter-

ance? What if the Most High had indeed placed on earth a power which He had vested with as much of His Truth as it is good for us to know, to be, by this power, delivered to the people He had bought, with the pledge of its infallible certainty? What if it was so, and that the world would not receive it? Why, from what we have heard of the world it seems to me that we could hardly expect that it would receive it. Think of 1800 years ago! The Lord of Heaven Himself came down unto His own, and His own received Him not. His people,—they were not even His enemies, it would have been but natural that *they* should reject Him,—but His people were crying for the Messiah to come; their thoughts and love were centred on Him Who was promised, and while they lifted up their hearts and voices to Heaven, and asked why He did not come and deliver them, He was moving about among them, and they would not know it! He told these, His own people who so loved the Messiah, that He was that beloved One, but they put Him to death as a blasphemer. He did not despise proving His mission by wonderful works; He healed the sick; He cast out the devils from among them, and they said that He, Himself, was the prince of the devils. So why should we expect the world to receive His Church, to believe her when she declares her sacred mission? Christ never prophesied smooth things about her, but foretold rather that she should be hated, even as He was hated. That the Catholic Church is looked on as the work of the devil, is to me only an additional proof of her divine origin. "If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more they of His household!"

I have now reached a point where I must try to disentangle the reasons which are gradually making me give an answer to my constant question: "Why should this not be true?" and say "This is true."

I must have tangible reasons for the Faith that is within me. I have them, and it is by them that my belief must stand or fall.

I often think that I *could* embrace the Catholic Faith on the strength of those vague feelings, which one would be inclined

to call instincts, did one not feel sure that they were the unseen workings of God's Spirit and grace in one's soul. I believe they really bear more weight with me than any regular argument, or adduced proof, or controversial refutation, for I believe that without this mystical belief and grace the most forcible reasoning would fail to convince. But I dare not trust them, and I never have dared, any more than I would dare trust plain reasoning without its being united to and confirmed by them. I certainly should never have reached the belief in the Catholic Church which is now mine, had I not diligently searched for every proof of those her claims, which my heart already told me long ago were just.

Before I enter further on the more practical part of this Paper, I must lay down two main points which I must bear in mind throughout everything that remains for me to say, for on these two points hinge in my mind all convictions, all reasons and beliefs. The first point is, that it is my deep-rooted belief that Truth is a city set on a hill which cannot be hid. We need never look for it in nooks and corners, a fragment here and a fragment there ; but in whatever state the world may be, there will always be the great city of Truth standing conspicuously before the gaze of mankind, though all may not call it Truth. I believe that the nature of Truth is such that to all those who wish to find it, at never mind what cost to themselves, or sacrifice of favourite or preconceived notions, there it is so evident that it cannot be hid. I believe that, just as Good, to a lover of it, can bear no likeness to Evil, so Truth can bear no likeness to Untruth. For the search after it, nothing need require to be really explained away, and nothing forcibly brought to the surface. Truth stands so prominent that a child can see it at a glance, though, as I said before, recognizing its nature at a glance is a different matter. We all know that the Great Truth Himself, though seen of all, was recognized by very few. And yet dare we say that He was so like untruth, that anything required being explained away, or forcibly bringing forward ? This conviction of the evidence of Truth will bear much weight with me as I go through the

several parts of this Paper, as I treat of the various Rules of Faith, and as I treat of the History of the Church, whether as displayed in the writings of the Fathers, or as revealed in the actual succession of facts. I shall be always looking for something large and comprehensive.

The second point that I wish to lay clearly before myself before proceeding further is, that definite knowledge is up to a given degree attainable in matters of belief. I believe that a certain amount of the heavenly mysteries was revealed to us, though what proportion it bears to the whole we do not know, and are not meant to know. Of that certain amount revealed I believe we can and should have a definite knowledge; nor do I think that the claim to the possession of a definite knowledge stunts or narrows our high conceptions of what is divine; for to those who, claiming a definite knowledge, have souls capable of a vast conception of things unseen, there is a glorious background to what is revealed, as stupendous and reverently vague as they have who maintain all to be obscure. As to those smaller souls of both classes to whom a vast conception is impossible, why I maintain that a finite something is better than a finite, or even an infinite, nothing.

Having said this, let me proceed to a division, under certain convenient heads, of all that I have to say. Difficult as I find it to collect my dishevelled convictions into some shape, I think I can reduce the main reasons of my present belief into four:—

- 1st. The necessity of a Rule of Faith, and the insufficiency of all but the Catholic Rule.
- 2nd. The spirit of Holy Writ, together with certain distinct passages found in it.
- 3rd. The writings of the Early Fathers.
- 4th. The History of the Church.

I.

Under this head I propose to consider the various Rules of Faith, and their sufficiency. I will begin by laying down what I consider to be the necessary qualities of a true Rule of Faith.

I consider that to be a true Rule, which could apply to all ages from the first to the second Advent of Christ, and which could govern circumstances instead of being governed by them. Having these qualities, its efficiency would not be interfered with by any stage of civilization or uncivilization, learning or ignorance ; it would appeal straight to, and satisfy the most learned philosopher and the most illiterate ploughboy or savage. It would be so simple that a child could grasp it, and yet so grand that none dare call it too small for them. By this test a Rule of Faith must, to my mind, stand or fall ; if it be found wanting on any of these points, I reject it.

The first thing I think that struck me as a forcible argument in favour of the Catholic Church, once I really began to examine Her claims to my faith's allegiance, was the necessity of a Rule of Faith, and the subsequent conviction that all but the Catholic Rule were unstable and insufficient. Her Rule, the Word of God, written and unwritten, interpreted by the Church under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, appeared to me as all-sufficient from the first moment I laid it before me, and every day I live I discover new beauties and new tokens of completeness in it. As the whole of this Paper must be more or less a treatise on the Catholic Rule, I shall not allude to it, or enlarge on it here. I have merely laid it down so that it may be present before me when I proceed to the other Rules.

I daresay the strong necessity of a Rule of Faith struck deeper into me than it would into many, simply because I had always lived without any rule for my faith, so that when I came to ask myself what I believed, and why I believed, I felt quite astray and could not answer.

I had been a Christian by name, and by profession, and also by belief, before I can remember. I never disbelieved, because I hardly knew that I believed. Before I knew the Catholic Church I had hardly reached the age when I suppose an independent realizing belief is as much a necessity as food or drink. Some, I believe, learn the truth when they are babies, and hold it to the end. Thank God for it ! If truth is learnt what matter how it is learnt ; but the great question is, How is

the Truth, or rather the many competitiveness for the name, how are they to be taught and learnt? There must be some Rule. To appreciate the full necessity for a Rule of Faith one must suppose an extraordinary case. Suppose then that a nation, which had always lived in perfect ignorance of Christ or His Church, were, for some reason, to wish to become Christian, and had not been led to it by any one who could have given a bias to one or other form of Christianity. On what grounds would the instructors of these people implant their doctrine? What Rule of Faith would they give for their instruction, and for that of their children after them? They must have a Rule. And so has thought every body of Christians; there is none that has not its Rule of Faith.

I believe that there are three main Rules outside the Catholic Church: private inspiration with its varieties, the Bible privately interpreted, and antiquity. I have nothing to do with the first of these, for I am not writing a dissertation on Rules of Faith, but only so far as they come into my inner life. Before, however, leaving this Rule, I cannot forbear placing under its head the mode of belief of a certain class of Christians of the present day. I mean those who believe in Christ, but do not attempt to know why they believe, and are annoyed if anything or anybody tries to attach their belief to any Rule. They are widely separated from those whom I mentioned above, and among whom I place my former self, who by never thinking about it, blindly follow the result of their teaching. These, that I am now talking about, have *arrived* at a belief in Christ by the inner evidence of faith alone. They cling to Him against their reason, they reject all dogma and the auxiliary doctrines as distinct from the one great vital Truth, and not to the purpose, so to speak; they are fast bound to Christ by a mystical bond of faith and love.

I do believe more firmly than I can say, that this is real faith, and light, and grace. I believe so entirely in the truth of Christianity that I must believe this to be something supernatural which binds them against their nature, to what I consider to be the great Truth. What more beautiful than this unreasoning faith?

What, one would say, more pleasing to God ? What indeed ? but only for individuals ; I will limit myself to that. Could it be the Rule of Faith for the Christian world ? by which, I mean, could it be such as we would fancy that Christ would have left His people as their guide ? How far can it be trusted as safe and true ? It seems to me that all such mystical inner evidences must have in them much akin to imagination, must, to a great extent, be the result of earlier impressions and education. The great question is, Can such faith be transmitted ? One generation might indeed be persuaded and carried away by the intense conviction and the beauty of the teaching of the transmitters ; but then comes the test of all Rules of Faith. Time, which deprives everything of its first spirit, and the halo of imagination, will best prove the intrinsic worth and weight of everything, and in this office of transmission, lie both the necessity and the test of a Rule of Faith.

And now as to the second Rule: the Bible privately interpreted. I must enter at some length on the reasons why I cannot consider it to be the Rule of Faith left to us by Christ. I dislike doing so; for I am inclined to enter much too vaguely into all arguments for and against a thing, into their spirit, rather than into their details ; I know that I rest more on the result of either objections or the contrary, instead of constantly carrying about with me the chain by which I arrived at the result. However, there the chain is, and by taking hold of it link by link, I believe I can make my way backwards and forwards along it at will. The Bible is the only Rule of Faith, that, as far as I can see, I could fall back on in case my hold on the Catholic Rule were shaken. That of personal inspiration could never, I feel quite sure, appeal to me, or take hold of me ; and as to antiquity, I can fancy people being led from it to a belief in the Catholic Rule, but I doubt whether any one who ever held to the latter, could *arrive* at holding the high Anglican Rule of antiquity. The Bible is, to my full belief, the inspired Word of God, so why should it not be the Rule of Faith left by Christ to His people ? I have read the Bible. I do not know it nearly so thoroughly as many people, but I have read it well, and know it well

generally, and I declare that the impression left on my mind is, that it could not be the sole Rule of Faith of the Christian world. But here I must try and give shape to my impressions.

In the first place, I do not think this written Word of God *living* enough. I can scarcely put defining words to what I mean by "living," but I think that anybody who has felt at all as I have would know fully what I meant. It is, if I may reverently so speak, much the same effect as that produced on one by a person's book, compared to the effect of the same person's voice. I know of men whose books I know nearly by heart, but I only find out when anything at all brings the living man before me, how dead, how almost unreal, those words of theirs seem in which I had lived. The Bible seems to give none of that sense of connection between Heaven and Earth which is given by the ever-living voice of the Holy Ghost, speaking through the Church. In the second place, I do not myself feel that the Bible is defined enough to have been intended as the sole Rule of Faith. I am speaking of the Christian Revelation, and the very contrast which it presents to the Law and Prophets which *were* given to the Jews as a Rule of Faith, makes me feel the insufficiency as such of the later Revelation. To believe that it was our whole and sole Rule of Faith would bring to me a return of that old distracting feeling that we were worse off than the Jews. I believe all things necessary to salvation to be contained in the Holy Book, but I do not think we are of ourselves capable of drawing them out. It seems to me that the very character of the New Testament precludes the likelihood of its having been given as the Rule of Faith. The Gospels—what are they but all-precious fragments, in reading which our constant cry is, "More, more"? And the Epistles give me the same impression of being also precious fragments; not fragments in themselves, but fragments of the Apostolic doctrine delivered by Jesus Christ to the twelve, written to different people in different circumstances, and touching on vital matters only so far as was applicable to the people to whom they were written. I have the feeling while reading them that before fully understanding them, we

must have already received the doctrine implanted in each Church by an Apostle, previous to the writing of the epistle. No one can ignore, after reading each epistle, that it was not from *it* that the addressed Church learnt its Faith. It had been implanted before. So, is that meant to ground us, which was not meant to ground them? And if there is something that ought to be known before the Epistles teach us, who can teach it to us, who claims to teach it to us, if not the Catholic Church?

It may be said, and is said, that the great vital doctrines of the Incarnation and Atonement of Jesus Christ can be drawn from the Holy Writings, and that beyond these great doctrines nothing signifies.

First, can those great vital Truths be so easily learnt from Holy Writ that everybody, even those spiritually called babes and sucklings for whom Christianity is meant, can extract the brilliant, pure Truth from among the many strange contradictions which run through the sacred books? And secondly, is there nothing else that we need know to lighten us on the Christian road of Faith, Hope, and Charity? True, every other doctrine leads up to and ends in these great vital ones, but do we not require to know and accept the others, just because they do lead up to them? Those doctrines are very awful, and could we grasp them if they stood there all alone to be accepted or rejected? We cannot easily learn all things necessary in the Bible. We learn that Jesus Christ was made man, but how difficult to prove that He was very God! How difficult to prove that He was not inferior to the Father; how difficult to prove that the Holy Ghost is equal to both; how difficult to prove there are not three Gods, but one God! And yet the longer I live, the more do I feel that the completeness, and as far as we dare say so, the comprehensibleness, of the plan of our salvation hangs on the right conception of these doctrines. I believe that all the auxiliary doctrines are inseparably connected with the great vital ones, and as surely lead to a firmer belief in these, as a disbelief or disregard, or ignoring of them, serves to weaken such belief. I cannot see how it should be a matter of no importance whether any single doctrine taught by Catholics and

Anti-Catholics together, or by Catholics alone, be true or untrue. If we take, for instance, the Sacraments, especially those of the Altar, Baptism, Penance, and Order, and consider their great effect on our existence, if such as they are represented to be, I cannot think how they *could not signify*. Take any doctrine, and I ask how the possibility of its Truth can be a matter of no importance. I feel I can say nothing stronger about the importance I attach to the discovery of the truth or untruth of every Catholic Christian doctrine, than that the Veneration of the Saints is the only one among them all which I feel could be *safely* ignored, for all that is therein involved is a greater *help* to ourselves. When, however, I consider that in a belief or disbelief of this doctrine, there is at stake the accepting or renouncing of the intercession of the whole Hierarchy of Heaven for our poor souls, I see how vital I think every other doctrine. The rejection from conviction of one or all auxiliary doctrines is, of course, another matter; I only speak of that view of the matter which makes it of no importance that the Truth or Untruth of these should be examined. It is because the Bible only *alludes* with more or less distinctness to each of the Christian doctrines, and does not in any way define them, leaving us in semi-doubt concerning them that it does not come to me as the Rule of Faith left by Christ to His people.

Am I, in looking for definiteness, looking for something that does not exist? May be, but the whole inner joy and purpose of my life hangs on it, so I cannot lightly give up the hope, the conviction that it does exist. It was one of the two main points that I laid down at starting, that our knowledge of things unseen, however finite, was meant to be definite, and I get to lay more stress on this point every day of my life, simply because we should be lost in the vague immensity of everything, could we not hold to something. My sense of the infinite of course increases, as I hope I get nearer to the great God. He only knows the minuteness of the grains of knowledge which He has revealed to us. I get to feel more and more the awfulness of the stupendous background of things utterly unknown and unseen. I get

to feel what an atom our world is, what an atom I am in the world. I get almost to despair about any aim and purpose for my little life. The only thing that keeps me hopeful and persevering about my life's aim, is our hold on what little is revealed to us. It is a wonder that God should have revealed anything of His mysteries to this atom in creation, our world, but less wonderful that He should have revealed that something definitely than indefinitely, for all revelation must have been made for some purpose—and as that purpose must be that we should at last reach a state of peace with our Maker, our knowledge, if given at all, would, we may well think, be given such as we may grasp it and use it. I feel this even about what is revealed to us about the nature of the Godhead, the Maker and Ruler of the whole universe, but how much more do I feel it about what, for aught we know, only concerns our world. It may be a despairing thought that our knowledge of the Infinite is so vague that we are obliged to have a finite knowledge given to us, to help us along. It is despairing—I count it among the many evils of this our probation time. We may be the only rebellious world; we may be the only people whom sin has so blinded that we cannot see our God, and whom sin has exiled from His presence. So if we are in a peculiar state, and if the great God has taken peculiar measures, so to speak, to restore us to His presence, why should we not know something about these measures? If all is clear to the rest of creation, may not we without boldness greedily clutch and cling to that little which, in spite of our sin, God has let us know? We are in exile; who that loves God but feels it every hour of his life—but we have hope before us. We shall see and know all things some day—we are promised it. If then, renewed and transformed, but still ourselves—if then, some day we shall see and know everything, is it impossible that we should know now a little about something?

This may be visionary, as I said before, but drops in the sea of Infinity and Immensity are so precious and helpful, that I cannot yield them without a struggle.

I think that much the clearest way of satisfying myself as to the sufficiency or insufficiency of the Bible, privately interpreted,

as a Rule of Faith, will be, instead of entering into my own convictions on the subject, to see what is the likely effect which it would have had on Christianity. If I think, at the end of this consideration, that it is a Rule which would have done for all ages of the Christian World, from the earliest till now (for the future is unknown), through all its stages of ignorance and knowledge, of belief and unbelief, of fervour and coldness; that it would have satisfied the wants of civilized as well as uncivilized countries; that the difference of races and customs would not have affected it; that educated and uneducated could have been equally worked on by it; and that it is and always has been equally easy and attainable to rich and poor, wise and simple, learned and ignorant, then I will say, "Well and good." If, however, at the end I do not think it all this, what can I say but that a Rule of Faith which cannot do for all is not the universal Rule established by Jesus Christ. As I cannot think there is more than one Truth, no more can I think there is more than one Rule, for I see that each Rule leads to a different end, if indeed most do not lead to many ends. I believe that what is once decreed on High is decreed for always, so that if a Rule is sufficient in this century, it always has been so, and always will be so, until some Decree changes the order of things, as happened 1800 years ago. I may be wrong in my idea of the great Immutable, and if so, I will own myself wrong throughout and try to begin my life again. It is born with me to think that He reigns for ever, our ages and generations passing before Him like nothing, so that I do not see what, except the death of this body with which the idea is born, can make me believe that God changes His ways and laws, modifying them for *us*, instead of our of necessity conforming to *them*, or else breaking ourselves against them. All I can do in this imaginary sketch of Christianity, with the Bible privately interpreted as its sole Rule, is to examine broadly and generally its likely effects. I will not enlarge on the way it would govern or be governed by such circumstances as I enumerated above, for it is such a matter of opinion and speculation that I do not care to put my private opinion against that of so many people. But

I will only say that it seems to me that the question I there put is to be so evidently answered in the negative, that I almost demurred before putting it. It seems to me that experience has shown that the sufficiency of the Bible privately interpreted as the Rule of Faith, has been, and must be, strangely affected by circumstances.

Leaving further details as a matter of opinion, I will proceed to the broad and general sketch. To appreciate to the full the sufficiency of the Bible as the Rule of Faith, we must try and fancy it to have been always the only Rule, or, at least, so dominant as not to have, in any way, profited by the result arrived at by the aid of any other Rule. We must imagine what has never existed that we know of, for there is no Creed, outside the Catholic Church, but has in some measure based its articles on an opposition to the Church. Those who have taken the Bible, privately interpreted, as their Rule of Faith, have the full inheritance of Catholic tradition and definitions to aid them.

It is by no means easy to divest the History of Christianity of the Catholic Rule of Faith ; for even if (not that I have the least doubt on the subject) it did not exist from the very first, clear and definite as now, it certainly did exist, as far back as we can trace, in a degree to preclude the possibility of the Bible having been considered as the *sole* Rule. Is there any Christian father's writings which can be laid down, without a conviction that *he*, at any rate, considered the Church to have great *authority* on matters of Faith ? This is, however, I suppose denied, for I cannot fancy that those who broke from the Catholic Church 300 years ago, holding that Christ had left the Bible as the Rule of Faith, will admit that it was never used as such. So there ought to be some light on the subject in those early days. We do not find much. The very existence of the Christian Revelation is wrapt in a certain cloudiness. It is only by an effort that we can make out when it was embodied as a part of inspired Writ. In the history of the first ages it seemed to be regarded as a part of Christian teaching rather than as its very rule. The Jewish revelation was for some time the only Scripture possessed by Christians, and to it, of necessity, refer

all allusions to Scripture contained in the New Testament. I do not know when the Christian inspired writings were first gathered together from the different countries from which they had been sent. I do not know when they were first translated, so as to become of general use. They were, if I know aright, written in Greek, a language unknown to the masses, and in Hebrew, a language peculiar to the Jews. The first translation into Latin, the language of the people who ruled the world, was, I think, made a century after the death of Christ, if so soon; I fancy it was a good deal later. Now if I may reverently so speak, it seems wonderful to me that if these writings were to be the Rule by which all Christians of all ages were to learn their Faith, the Apostles should not have solemnly gathered them together, and delivered them to the people as their guide after their, the Apostles', death; and this on a day as noteworthy as every other festival kept by the Christians; but, above all, we cannot help asking why they did not sift the inspired from the uninspired writings. This, we know, they did not do. That great task was left to their successors, to men who, we are supposing, had no special help, no special right to do so; and who had to depend upon their own judgment as much as any set of men who might to-day be deciding on a case of a will or legacy. People are furious enough when, in these days, men try to reject certain books of Scripture as uninspired, and yet those very books which they trust to were chosen among many by men, who they maintain had no more right to reject those they did, than have these present day critics to reject this, that, and the other book.

A few steps past the Apostles' age and we are obliged to consider this true, if true, Rule of Faith to be lost, and in the further review of the past I can unchallenged confine myself to a suppository view of the question. It seems to me that one main difficulty must, until nearly the sixteenth century, have stood in the way of the application of the Bible as a Catholic Rule of Faith. It could not have been universally distributed till the invention of printing, owing to the immense cost and labour necessarily spent on the production of each copy; the small

number of those who could read must also have been a great obstacle. Now I do not see how these obstacles could have been surmounted. We see that they *did* exist, and we can none of us forget that the future was ever as clear to the all-seeing God as past or present. How then would the biblical Rule of Faith have prospered through those darker ages had it still been accepted as *the* Rule. I suppose that the Sacred Books would have been widely read aloud, as in fact they were; but they must be expounded, and instead of the exposition being one and unchangeable, given by the authority of a Church which claimed to be guided by the Holy Ghost on all matters of Faith, and which checked all commentators who departed from the one view of it, the task of exposition would have fallen into the hands of those who avowedly taught on their own authority, and used their own learning, piety, and conjectures, as their sole interpreters, and who, if they set up claims to a higher authority, abandoned their own Rule of Faith. The experience of these later days shows what we might have expected then. Now, at least fewer in the world are blindly ignorant, and no interpreter can teach anything without his teaching and interpretation being well *aired*, so to speak. Even in these days, after only 300 years of growth, one can scarcely number the different sectional shades of religious belief which are fiercely pitted one against the other. There is no one among the countless Christian sects which does not base its own peculiar ideas on some portion of Scripture, reading the remainder in the light of that portion, and which does not wish to force its views on its multitude of rival sects. Judging by the effect which the private interpretation of Scripture has had on the unity of Christendom during its sway of 300 civilized, enlightened years, we can in some measure see what would have been the effect of such a system during 1500 lawless, ignorant years:—first division, then hatred and strifes, murders and wars, over the whole face of the *Christian* world, each country taking its favourite view of Scripture as a national distinction, and making it a plea for its ravages and aggressions; each party setting up a Scriptural war-cry, and to the sound of

it committing murder and outrages. We know how bitterly irreligious the "religious" wars of those days were, when differences of belief were, by comparison, so few. Poor world, if those differences and effects had been multiplied a thousand-fold ! It seems a mercy of Heaven that such a breeder of dissension as the personal Rule of Faith should not have taken possession of men's minds, till men were in some degree civilized. And where, meanwhile, would be that buried treasure, Truth ? Where, indeed ? Who would be bright-eyed enough to pick that pearl without price from the thousands of bad pearls that claimed to be it. But here, perhaps, I am treading on ground that I intended to have left untrodden, for it has been my object while making this little sketch, to confine myself to the expediency of unity, quite setting aside any question of its necessity.

It may be said that in these days such objections as the scarcity of the Bible and the ignorance of the world are at an end. The first certainly is ; and as we must judge by comparison, the second is partially at an end too. But even were it granted that two such main obstacles are now beginning to be removed, can it be said that they *are* removed ? How very many there are even in civilized England who cannot read, and if they can are incapable of forming an independent opinion, or of drawing Truth from the Sacred Book ; and yet the Christian Faith is meant for the simple quite as much as for the wise. The essence of this Rule of Faith is, that the Bible should be privately interpreted, and is it following this Rule to be blindly led by another person ? And yet are not the many brought up to believe, or taught later, one or other of the various interpretations of Scripture ? Surely the Rule of Faith is not here acted up to. Is it not acted against, because it is found insufficient for universal application ? In such cases we see how necessary it is to deprive ourselves of the pre-existence of the Catholic traditions and definitions before we can justly examine the Protestant Rule of Faith in all its nakedness.

This is all as concerns matters of belief. For practice,

indeed, the Bible is as clear as all-sufficient. A man's life is too short for the attainment of even one of the maxims contained in it. It seems to me wrong to torture the Holy Book into an universal controversial catechism, for I think we thereby make the practical precepts and examples misty.

I do not cite as an objection the uncertainty that people may have as to the inspiration of the Bible, with no given ground for the belief in it, no alleged reason for thinking they should believe in it, but the earthly traditions handed from father to son for generations, or their own inner convictions on the subject, which might easily be the result of that tradition, or of their own education. That is a matter of faith, not harder, nor less hard to accept, than the infallibility of the Church's teaching. I see nothing more believable, nor less wonderful (it is all wonderful) in the Holy Ghost having inspired certain men to write God's infallible Truth, than in His abiding in Christ's mystical Body, teaching, through men, infallible Truth to the end.

I will say no more about the Biblical Rule of Faith, for I have said enough to answer my purpose of gathering into some shape my ideas on the subject. I am glad that my task is at an end, for I have said all I have said unwillingly. I have done it badly, and may be I should have done it better had not the task been so against the grain. I cannot bear, when treating of the Faith of the Christian world and the road to it, to enter into petty details and objections. I have done it, for on this subject, even more than others, it was, I feel, high time to gather all my straggling impressions and convictions into one body, tending towards one end. Before, however, I leave this section of my Paper which relates to the various Rules of Faith, I must touch on one system which certainly obviates, as it was meant to obviate, most of the difficulties arising from the consideration of the Bible privately interpreted as the sole Rule of Faith. I mean such a system as the Established Church of England, intended as a modifier of both the Catholic and Biblical Rules. I do not mean the High Anglican system, which, though as far as I can see inseparable from the regular Established Church, builds its Faith on antiquity, and professes not to belong to any

national Church, but looking over its head, as it were, claims to belong only to the Church Catholic, and above all, Apostolical. I have purposely said nothing as yet about this high Anglican Rule of Faith, as I shall be able to consider it more satisfactorily together with the writings of the Fathers. What I wish now to consider is the Established Church, which does not reject the name of Protestant, and which was set up (never mind when), and is set up in denunciation of the Church of Rome, and as a bulwark against any approaches to or from her. I begin by applying the test—which I maintain must be applied to every Rule of Faith. Could it have lasted through all ages? Could it be universal? There is a difficulty to be met at the very outset; for anything to last, it must have a beginning, and I do not see that the Established Church of England, or any other of the same stamp, could ever have had a beginning without the pre-existence of the Catholic Church. I do not think its foundation could have had that misty outline which once formed its strength, and is now beginning to prove its weakness, if there had not been a powerful and distinct system in semi-contradiction to which, and in semi-protestation against which, it drew up its codes. How, for instance, could the nature of the Sacraments be left as vague as they are, had they not somehow or somewhere been defined, rightly or wrongly, no matter, but so defined that a half acceptance, half rejection of such definitions was enough to satisfy men's minds? It seems to me that the effect of the Church of England's foundations is very similar to that of the tracing of a drawing, in which the tracer has tried to correct the original, by leaving out some portions, inserting others, and rendering some indistinct and obscure. So long as the tracing is laid on the drawing we can perceive the draughtsman's object, for the perfect outline and the distinct lights and shadows of the drawing underneath are still visible, and give their own meaning to the imperfect "modified" outline over it. Once, however, remove the tracing, and by itself it looks so flat, so angular, so unfinished, that you are obliged to refer to the drawing, so as to connect its various parts. When such a difficulty arises as to

the possibility of such a system ever being able to have an independent beginning, it seems almost useless to stop to consider whether it would endure to the end. It seems to me that when we see this English Church, this ark of the sixteenth century, tottering already, and refusing to satisfy men's wants, leaking at every seam, letting out its cargo at one end, and letting in all manner of things at the other, when we see her trying to draw herself in, and fence herself about, but gradually forced to acknowledge and accept as part of herself things which her founders would have abhorred, but which they made no defence against, simply because they never foresaw them, though their silence is taken for consent and approval, it seems folly to put any more questions as to her durability.

And lastly, as to whether such a system, or rather the multiplication of such a system, as the Church of England, could be universal. In this country it has, I feel, been a bulwark against more divisions than there have been; but could such an entirely national institution be the universal Christian system? Of course not as it is, English and nothing else; but could an institution similar in character, with slight variations to suit it to each particular people, have always thrived and flourished, established in each country of the world? No! Christianity was never meant to be a national institution! One thing that more than many makes me look at the Catholic Faith as the true representative of Christianity, is that it alone of all creeds has always had in view the making the world one vast brotherhood. She hates nationalities, and she alone has tried to efface them instead of fostering them. What other Christian creed is there that is not in some measure national? She alone may dare say, as said St. Pacianus of old: "Christian is my name, Catholic is my surname." It seems to me that this un-national view of Christianity is the view presented in Holy Writ. This brings me to the second part of my Paper.

II.

Under this head it is my intention to examine what we might imagine the Christian Church would be, judging from all that relates to it in Holy Writ. In examining this to my satisfaction, I shall have to go over a great deal of what I have already touched on.

I will begin by what I can call the broad view of the question, that is, the general view of the Faith in the true God, as drawn from the Bible, taken as a history and a whole. After thinking over the Bible as a whole, the impression left on my mind of the history of God's Faith is this:—God made man in His image: man marred that image and left God, then God rejected him and condemned him to sorrow, and the sin which he had brought on himself; still, however, holding out a future hope of a good time that was to come. While He rejected him, and condemned him, God bade him serve Him still, and this man did for a little time. Men multiplied and increased, and were scattered over the earth, and they lost the true knowledge of God; the knowledge slipped away almost without any wilful renouncing of it on the part of man. Then God, to fasten the belief in Him and secure it from entirely disappearing, chose one people as the repository of His Truth, and fixed His Truth, or rather that amount of it which it pleased Him to reveal, by such stringent and detailed laws and ceremonials that it could never again be lost through sheer ignorance. This law was unchangeable, and all must bow to it. At times teachers were sent from God to remind the people of the spirit of His Law, and to consolidate it. Yet though this law was so rigid, though present punishments and rewards were ever there to keep the people in mind of their God, and though the warning voice was never long silent, all this did not suffice to keep the people straight. They forgot God, and left Him and turned to strange gods, and knew nothing of the true God. The only thing that ever brought them back was some living voice. At last came the fulfilment of law and prophecy, towards which all had been tending. The whole state of things was

now changed, not, we are especially told, by the doing away of the law, but by its being fulfilled. So now let us look at the two views of the nature of the Christian dispensation: the one as held by Protestants, and the other by Catholics, and see which is most like the fulfilment of all that had gone before. Take the first view. Picking up the thread of the history of God's Faith where we broke it off, let us say that Christ having at last come, died, and bought us for Himself, and opened the possibility of salvation to the world; not as a new thing, for who can doubt that Abraham, and Moses, and David rightly hoped for salvation; but still His precious Death it was that opened it to those who went before, as well as to those who followed after. After His ascension He left the redeemed to find their own way Heavenward. He promised to hear their prayers, and left a guide to lead them to Him in the shape of some scattered inspired writings, which they were to collect and separate from all spurious writings, and this guide was one which for 1500 years must necessarily be sealed to the mass of men. The Holy Ghost was also to dwell among them in the stead of Christ, Who before He left the earth promised to send Him; but then this Mission, this guidance of the Holy Ghost, was nothing new. He had dwelt with men from the beginning; indeed certain individuals were more evidently under His guidance before the coming of Christ than after, except just at first; and what is more, these individuals under this guidance had been of inestimable help to the mass of the people, and this help was taken away now. Had not all help apparently gone? The redeemed people, envied, as it were, for so long a time, by their predecessors, knew that their God had saved them, for their fathers told them so. They felt their souls fly towards Him, and they longed to serve Him—but how? They did not know. Were they to trust to the inner inspirations of their own blind hearts, the doing of which had been called folly by the wise man? They had been taught that the old law had been given for only so long as the world was in darkness; was then the present light so great that they required no rule nor law? The law had been too dead to keep people straight, if

God had not spoken to them through the living voices of the prophets; and what was there living to keep God's people straight now? What was there but fragments of His written doctrine, memory, and human tradition as dead as the law, and, as all things dead, liable to, and certain of corruption?

And had not even the living voice of the inspired teachers sometimes proved unavailing? So, how could the Christians, who had so many more of the mysteries of God thrown open to them, and who felt lost in a sea of bewildered awe and wonder, how could they find and follow the right way with no teacher at all?—for avowedly the teachers that they had were but blind leaders of the blind, requiring to be taught as much as they themselves, and having no surer foundation for their Faith than they had.

These wanderers who wished to go along the one right path saw hundreds of parties springing up all round them, each one claiming to teach the true Christianity. There was no possible shade of difference of opinion which was left unrepresented: some went so far as to deny the Godhead of Christ, while others denied His Manhood, and each and all claimed to have a sure foundation for his peculiar tenets, and while some found one form of argument unrefutable, others were heartily convinced by just the opposite one.

Who could show the one true way? Those who had been taught by Jesus Christ and His Apostles were long since dead. There was a book, indeed, written by the Apostles, and from that surely the truth might be gathered! But the truth, though infallibly there, was to those even who could make use of the Holy Book, so ambiguously put, that somehow each and every one of the different parties, though differing even in essentials, founded its tenets on what was contained in that same Book. Then these wanderers remembered the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the promises of help from above, and they prayed for light, and their prayers were loving, trustful, and fervent: but some deep mystical conviction made one go one way, and a second another, and each felt sure that God bade him follow that way. No living man was

capable of grasping the whole of revealed Truth, so each grasped what he saw, and called it all. There was no place, no power with which God had put all that it is good for us to know of His Truth, to be by it kept for the faithful. Each sect condemned all other sects, having nothing but its own conclusions to go on, and while it was honestly and zealously attacking one form of what it called error, it was being as honestly and zealously attacked by a third. And why might not those wanderers unpresumptuously ask—why may not *we* ask, for it is *our* state that I have described—If Christianity is such as I have described, Christians must wander to and fro now as much as then—so why may not *we* unpresumptuously ask, why God's Faith was left so unguarded all of a sudden; for was the freight of the Christian Church less precious, or less corruptible, than that of the Jewish ?

And now to turn to the Catholic view of Christianity. It is so simple that there is but little room for comments. The Catholic Church as well as Protestantism teaches that the law was the type of Christ, and that when He came, the law ceased to be—the shadow giving way before the substance ; but it carries the fulfilment of law and prophecy further on. It teaches that the substance which chased away the shadow was no one bright gleam, changing everything, it is true, but passing away after changing everything, leaving, at most, a track of light in place of the former shadow. The Catholic Church teaches that the change was change indeed, and the substance substance indeed, to this hour—that after Christ had bought salvation and opened the Kingdom of Heaven, a glorious time began, a new heaven and a new earth were laid before us, His people, and the time so sighed for from ancient days proved something to be sighed for in very deed. It teaches that together with and hanging to the imperfect foreshadowing of Christ by the law, was the imperfect foreshadowing of the mission of the Holy Ghost, by His occasional voice being heard through the prophets. Both law and prophets were done away with when the Second and Third Persons of the Blessed Trinity came to reign on this

our earth. The Second Person came revealed in the Natural Body, though He had been from all eternity, and purchased by His Death and Sacrifice the possibility of our salvation, as well as the coming of the Holy Ghost as the means by which we might attain that salvation. When Christ left us for a while, the Holy Ghost, One with Christ, came to guard Christ's bought ones from the errors which God knew would creep into an unguarded fold. He came (though He too had been from all eternity), as specially and marvellously revealed in the Mystical Body, as God the Son had been revealed in the Natural Body. While He has unwaveringly pointed, still points, and will point us to the great aim of our life and death, He holds out, supplies, and preserves the means of that grace by which the great aim is to be known and attained.

There is a simplicity, a calm, a harmony about this view of Christianity which gives me a feeling of deep peace and security, and there is a grandeur and dignity about it which says to me clearer than any words could say it, that no man, or mass of men, could have formed such a sublimely simple conception, and still less, having formed it, could have so played a part as to make its results as grand and complete as its conception. This is what all we Christians say about Christianity, and I say the same about Catholicism, as I shall further draw out in the fourth section of this Paper. I see the same hand in the mission of the Third Person of the Trinity thus interpreted, as I see in the mission of the Second. Let it always be remembered that it is no less a doctrine than the special and peculiar mission of God the Holy Ghost, which divides the Faith of the Catholic Church from the Faith of every other Christian. It is no matter of detail, no petty doctrine; it is no light thing to be despised, to be slurred over, to come to an accommodation about, to be ignored, saying there is no vital difference between "my creed and yours." When men do not believe in the revelation of Christ in the Natural Body, we do not call them Christians; so when men do not believe in the revelation of the Holy Ghost in the Mystical Body, we do not call them Catholic Christians.

So much for what is, after all, only my idea of the likely result of the old system. Now let me look at the direct promises relating to the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament, then at what appears in the later revelation to be the fulfilment of those prophecies, and then I will look and see which view of Christianity, the Catholic or Protestant, most comes up to what we have been led to expect.

In looking over those prophecies which foretold the coming of Christ, it seems to me that beyond the blessed promise of His Advent and Atonement, there was held out the hope—the certainty, of a good time which was to follow, and be the result of His Death—a time of peace and righteousness, of calm after the storm, of certainty after uncertainty, of freedom from error. These promises are so mixed up with others, in the prophecies, and so implied throughout, that it is quite difficult to reduce them to definite examples. However, I have done my best to gather together those which are to me most clear and explicit, and as I have never collected them together elsewhere, I copy them at length here.

1 (Isaiah ix. 7. Following immediately after that splendid description of the names and nature of the Messiah.) “Of the “increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, “upon the throne of David, and upon His Kingdom, to order and “establish it with Judgment and with Justice from henceforth “even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform “this.”

2 (Isaiah xxxv. 8.) “And a highway shall be there, and a “way, and it shall be called, The Way of Holiness: the unclean “shall not pass over it, but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, “though fools, shall not err therein.”

3 (Isaiah iv. 9, 10, 13, 14.) “As I have sworn that the “waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I “sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee, “for the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, saith “the Lord, that has mercy on thee.—All thy children shall be “taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children. “In righteousness shalt thou be established.”

4 (Isaiah lix. 21.) "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My Spirit is upon thee, and My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seeds' seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."

5 (Isaiah x. 13, 15.) "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box tree together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious. I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations."

6 (Isaiah lx. 19.) "The sun shall be no more thy light by day, neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee. But the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God, thy glory. The sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself. For the Lord shall be thine everlasting light."

7 (Isaiah v. 2, 3, and in very nearly the same words Micah iv. 12.) "And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow into it."

8 (Isaiah xxxii. 15-18.) "Until the Spirit be poured on us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever, and My people shall dwell in a peaceful habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places."

9 (Daniel ii. 44) "In the days of these kings shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed."

Add to these passages the 61st chapter of Isaiah, most of the 31st, 32nd, and 33rd chapters of Jeremiah, and the 39th of Ezichiel, which I will not copy at length. There are probably many passages unknown to me, bearing the same meaning as those I have cited.

Now one cannot think that all these epithets of peace and security, judgment and justice, holiness and righteousness, can apply to the state of *individuals* after the coming of Christ. Events have gone far to prove that our bad hearts are but little changed for the better.

It seems to me that all those prophecies *might* easily foreshadow just such a state of security and truth as would be the Catholic Church, if, as she claims to be, she is under the perpetual, unerring guidance of the Holy Ghost. I say it *might* easily foretell such a condition—it remains to be seen whether that which relates to the Christian Church in the later Revelation tends to confirm that likelihood. After reading the Gospels the impression left on my mind is that Jesus Christ did not visit this earth only to die, that is, only to open salvation to us by the one perfect sacrifice, nor do I feel that His only other purpose was to leave us a high example and aim, towards which to strain as unceasingly as vainly till the end of the world. I feel that he came to build the Christian Church; so it remains to me to search and see what sort of thing the Christian Church was, and whether in its infancy, as we see it in the Gospels, it was of a nature to justify us in applying to it those prophecies above cited, which so evidently relate to something under special and Divine guidance, that if we find nothing on earth to which they could refer, we must apply them to things unknown to this earth. Before Christ's birth—in the very annunciation of it, the Angel Gabriel uses words so similar to those prophecies quoted, that we cannot but think that the time of peace and righteousness and judgment in them promised was close at hand, and that the Advent of Him which was now announced was not only to be the greatest event of our world, on which the fate of those who went before, and those who followed afterwards, was to depend; but that it was to be the beginning of a great era, and that a marked change was to come over the relationship between God and man. I maintain that I can find the fulfilment of the promise conveyed by Gabriel, "He shall reign over His house for ever, and of His Kingdom there

shall be no end,"—nowhere but in the Catholic theory of the Christian Church.

I must proceed to draw out my ideas of the nature of the Christian Church as displayed in the Gospels. When I see in them that our Blessed Lord taught but little to the world at large, and that all His principal discourses and precepts were addressed to His Apostles, I feel that to those Apostles some great trust was to be committed. When I read that before the election of the twelve He spent a night in prayer, I feel that He was thus careful, not only that they might be fit to spread the Gospel as widely as might be in the ordinary life of a man, but that they might worthily build up the great Church, the first stone of which He laid by His Death, and that they might safely and worthily transmit His pure doctrine and mighty means of salvation which He entrusted to them. I have also the feeling that the reason why the Evangelists record so very few things among the words He must have spoken, was that they, and He who moved them to write, knew that His doctrine was given to His Apostles, and was never more to be lost.

"To you it is given to know the mysteries of God," was said to the Apostles, but knowledge was not all that was given to them. The actual power left by Jesus Christ with His Apostles was very mighty. "As My Father has sent Me, even so I send you."—(St. John xx. 21.) We have but to think for a moment what Jesus Christ was to see how great their mission must be, if it was to be equal to His, which is so great, so unfathomable, that we do not try to fathom it.

Again, "He that heareth you, heareth Me. He that despiseth you, despiseth Me."—(St. Luke x. 16.)

"Ye are the light of the world, a city set on a hill cannot be hid—ye are the salt of the earth."—(St. Matthew v. 13, 14.)

"I have given them Thy word. Sanctify them through Thy truth, Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also might be sanctified

through the truth. And the glory which Thou gavest Me have I given them."—(St. John xvii. 14, 17, 18, 19, 22.)

"All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth,—go ye therefore and teach all nations,—teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."—(St. Matthew xxviii. 17-19.)

"If he neglect them, tell it unto the Church, but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man, and a publican. Verily I say unto thee, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven."—(St. Matthew xviii. 17-19.)

"I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye may go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain."—(St. John xvi. 16.)

The Apostles appreciated the power thus given to them. It must have been an awful sense of this power which made St. Peter, for the good of Christ's Church, strike Ananias and Sapphira dead with a word, leaving them no time for repentance; and which made the Apostles write, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." "We are of God," writes St. John. "He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of Truth, and the Spirit of error."—(1st St. John iv. 6.)

And St. Paul writes, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."—(1st Corinthians xv. 12.)

That such power was vested in the Apostles is undoubted. The question is whether the power was given to them only, so as to die with them, or whether it was given to them by Christ as the founders of His Church, to be by them transmitted, and never again to leave His Church until He came to relieve her of her charge. Could this question be clearly answered, all controversy were at an end, for if there is a Church vested with such

power as Christ vested His Apostles with, then indeed is the Catholic Church justified in her proudest boasts. Now I cannot see, if I may so speak, why such overwhelming gifts and power should have been given to the Apostles if they were to cease with their death. I cannot see why our blessed Lord should have exerted the divine power so mightily and so singularly, as to have sent out twelve shortlived men with an authority literally divine, and have put the remission and retention of sins into their hands, if that power was to last only as long as their lives. If it could avail souls that absolution should be received through any human instrument instead of going straight to the Heavenly Court, why limit its gift to a few years? If it did not avail, why bestow it, so making men have to change their ideas of forgiveness when the last of the twelve died? It could not have been given exclusively to these founders of the Church, as it is asserted by many that the gift of working miracles was given, that is, in order to lay the foundation of the Church by works which were so divine in appearance as to carry conviction with them, for none on whom the Apostles bestowed absolution could have known whether it availed or not, for by no outward sign was the cleansing from sin made manifest. I cannot see how the Church would have been permanently benefited by the unlimited infallible rule of the Apostles, acting, as they tell us, in communion with the Holy Ghost. I see rather that it would have been much injured, for the Church was far from firmly established in the world when they died; indeed her most difficult times were approaching, for her worst enemies, "they of her own household," were springing up thickly when the last of the twelve died; and I cannot but feel that the Christian community would only have been left weaker for having been divinely and infallibly ruled for some score or two of years, and then left suddenly to the unaided guidance of man. I cannot but feel that it would suffer under the same disadvantages, and share the probable fate of a country powerfully and despotically ruled by a king, who was so wise and unfailing that no one dreamt of disputing his authority, and which, at his death, was left entirely to the guidance of whoever chose to govern it—of

men whose will was to act wisely and well, but who, together with the other subjects of the king, had been so accustomed to have everything settled for them unquestioned, that they knew not how to hold the reins of government.

And what is the Church that is so often mentioned ? It must be something ! It must be something actually existing, living, visible,—something more than the community of the faithful ; else what is the meaning of the mustard tree, in which the fowls of the air lodged, or of the net which gathered in fish ? It is clearly something distinct from the fowls of the air and the fish, *i.e.*, the faithful. This Church which Christ spoke of as having such authority, that he who did not hearken to its admonitions should be treated as a heathen and publican,—which He said was to be built on a rock, and which the gates of hell should not prevail against,—which St. Paul says is the pillar and ground of truth, must be something of infinite importance to Christianity. It was evidently *something*. Let me now see what are its attributes as described in the Bible.

We seem to catch a glimpse of the way in which the Church was the pillar and ground of truth, against which the gates of hell could not prevail, from those passages in which the Apostles allude to their own infallible teaching, and their mode of transmitting it to others, to be by them further transmitted.

“ Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I pray you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.”—(Cor. xi. 1, 2.)

“ Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.”—(1st Thess. iii. 16.)

“ And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.”—(2nd Tim. iii. 2.)

“ Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me in faith and love, which is by Christ.”—(2nd Tim. i. 13.)

“ But continue thou in the things which thou hast learnt, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learnt them,

and that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures."

—(2nd Tim. iii. 14, 15.)

"O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust."

—(1st Tim. vi. 20.)

"Stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or by epistle."—(2nd Thess. ii. 15.)

One of the chief attributes of the Church, as described in the New Testament, is that she was to be one—not one only in unity of doctrine, which, as I shall see later, was to be a great characteristic—but mysteriously and mystically one, and one with Christ, as the Trinity is one, in that kind of unity which it requires seeming contradictions to make clear.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe in me through their word, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me and hast loved me."—(St. John xvii. 20-23.)

"And other sheep I have that are not of this fold; they also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one Shepherd."—(St. John x. 16.)

"For as we have many members, and all members have not the same office,—so we being many are one Body in Christ, and every one members one of another."—(Romans xii. 5.)

"For we being many are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread."—(1st Cor. x. 17.)

"By one spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member but many."—(1st Cor. xii. 13, 14.) "God hath tempered the body together, that there should be no schism in the body."—(1st Cor. xii. 25.) "Is Christ divided?"—(1st Cor. i. 13.)

"Ye are all one in Christ Jesus."—(Gal. iii. 28.)

"And He gave some apostles, some prophets, some evange-

lists, and some pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ ; till we all come in the unity of the Faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of Christ ; that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of man, by cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive ; but speaking the truth in love, may grow unto Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ : from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."—(Eph. iv. 11-17.)

" Endeavouring to keep the unity of spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; One Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, One God, and Father of all."—(Eph. iv. 3-6.)

" For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the Church, and He is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it ; that He might sanctify it and cleanse it by the washing of water with the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without any blemish. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

There is, as I said before, a different kind of unity, simply the unity of belief which is described as a chief characteristic of Christ's Church, and strongly inculcated on the faithful as a duty, as a necessity, without which they could not be faithful. " That ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel."—(Phil. i. 27.)

" I beseech you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together

in the same mind and in the same judgment. God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the Churches of the saints.”—(1st Cor. xiv.)

And this importance of unity as a Christian quality we gather further from the mention of, and condemnation of, heresy. If unity were not obligatory, heresy could not be thus sweepingly condemned. Indeed, if unity were not a mark of the Church, I cannot see whereby heresy could be distinguished. What sect more than another could, by a dispassionate looker-on, be called heretic in England at this day! (See Gal. v. 20, 1st Cor. xi. 19, Tim. iii. 10, 2nd Peter ii. 1.)

The first question that arises to my lips, after looking at all these quoted passages, is “How could these things be?” How would Christianity be able to maintain itself in the high state thus described? How could this beautiful fabric, full of such priceless marvels, remain unshaken through, may be, thousands of years? How could the doctrine which Christ delivered to the apostles be handed down unblemished beyond one or two generations? In what way was the Church, the Body, to be one, even as the Father and Son were One? How were its members to hold one doctrine? How was Hell not to prevail against it? How was it to be glorious, without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish? As I said, the thought that arises to one’s lips is, “How can these things be?”

“With men this is impossible,” said Christ, in answer to a similar question, “but with God all things are possible.” One bows one’s head not only to the possibility, but to the certainty, of that being done which God says shall be done, and if He gives no light as to how it is to be done, one is ready to believe without the light. In this case, however, I feel that great light is given as to how the Church was to be thus singularly gifted; and this light I find in the mission of the Holy Ghost. “I will pray to the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”—(St. John xiv. 16,

17.) "These things have I spoken to you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you."—(St. John xiv. 25, 26.) "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you unto all truth: For He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come: He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I that He shall take of mine and show it unto you."—(St. John xvi. 13-15.)

If the special office of the Holy Ghost lay in abiding with Christ's Church for ever, to teach it all things, to call to remembrance the doctrine of Christ, and to guide it to all truth, what further wonder that the Church's Mission should be so very great.

It is no longer a matter of doubt or wonder that the Church should be unerring, but rather a case of doubt and wonder if she did err.

I cannot be wrong in supposing the office of the Church to be singular, when I look at the solemn way our Lord bequeathed His mission to His Apostles in the last verses of St. Matthew's Gospel, when He lets them know what a stupendous work He was about to do by first reminding them that all power in heaven and earth was given to Him. That this mighty mission was not confined to the Apostles themselves, but belonged to their last successor as well, we see by His saying that He would be with them in this mission to the end of the world. I do not think I am wrong in thinking that one would, from this and all other passages, be led to expect something very great and singular in the Christian Church. The promise in the Old Testament, the institution in the New Testament, wonderfully agree, and to my mind there is something which has existed ever since, which equally agrees with promise and institution.

I said at starting that the form in which the whole great question presented itself to me was, "Why should not this be truth?" rather than "What is truth?" so I cannot pretend to have

actually arrived at my present idea of the Catholic Church by this collection of passages. I have but been confirmed by them. I do not know whether I should have been capable of drawing any conclusion from them, if I had not had a ready-made conclusion to apply, and see whether it fitted. I do not know whether, if I knew nothing about the Catholic Church, these passages would have conveyed to my mind the idea of such a system as she is. Now, however, I cannot see what other idea they could convey. I see a direct line of connection running through every one of the passages I have cited; be they prophecy, or be they fulfilment, they all tend to one end. What shall I say when I see the Catholic Church actually existing, agreeing in her claims with all that they contain? Did she, or rather did her unknown founders, collect together such passages, and found her upon them? No, even her most virulent accusers have never affirmed that her so-called errors were premeditated, or that her claims were systematically drawn up on a preconceived plan: the worst they have said of her is, that she is an accumulation of neglect and corruption. It is, indeed, a strange coincidence that the claims of this unclean mass of error should have so exactly fallen into the shape of the Church described above! For what are her highest, and if false, her wickedest claims? Why, that she is established in righteousness, in judgment, in justice; that the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err in her way; that the words which God has put into her mouth shall never depart from her; that God is her everlasting light; that she is founded on a rock; that she is the pillar and ground of truth; that she is without spot or wrinkle; holy and without blemish; that she is infallibly and mystically one; that the Holy Ghost abides with her, teaching her all truth, and calling to remembrance the doctrine of Christ; that she holds the keys of Heaven; that she is, in fact, sent by God the Son, as He was sent by God the Father.

Oh, why should not this be truth? How grand and simple and God-like if it is truth! How terribly grand and simple if it is a lie!

III.

Of all the forms of argument brought forward to prove that the Catholic Church now is the same in every way as that Church founded by Jesus Christ 1800 years ago, and that her doctrines and claims have remained unchanged since then, the argument drawn from the writings of the early Fathers is to me the most convincing.

I believe if no other argument could be brought forward in favour of Catholicism, this alone would convince me. I do not, however, say this fully meaning it, for the most striking and startling and strong thing which, to my mind, can be said in her favour is, that so many lines of argument, starting from different points, converge towards and end in her; insomuch that among the many men of different nations, different natures, and in different circumstances, who have been converted to her faith, there is scarcely a species of argument left untried or found wanting, nor has there been a side of human nature left untouched by her claims.

The real thing about the Fathers' writings which most works on me is the fact of their definite, conclusive words, coming on the top of all other vague forms of argument, showing that what one might have been led by these to expect, did actually exist when they wrote; thus turning what was but a matter of speculation into a matter of history. Though it is proverbially but a woman's line of reasoning to say that a thing is worthy of belief because it has always been believed, still I fancy there are but few Christians who would not agree with me in taking this as a test of the doctrine of Christianity, even though a different conclusion be arrived at by each person as to what always has been believed. I myself take the writings of the Fathers as the clue to the solving of the question.

Of course two very obvious things must be ascertained about the early Christian writings before they could lead where they have led me, *i.e.*, to Catholicism.

1st.—Whether what is in them taught as Christian doc-

trine be the same as was delivered by Jesus Christ to His Apostles.

2nd.—Whether what is now taught in the Catholic Church as Christian doctrine be the same as was taught by the Fathers.

Respecting the first question there can be no proof, none but a strong inner reliance on the goodness, the justice, and the mercy of our blessed Lord—and for this reason. The extracts I have collected (I have made the collection elsewhere, and as they are lengthy I shall most likely not copy a single one at length here), not one the substance of which is not what one might this day hear from any Catholic pulpit, or read in any Catholic book, all belong to the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th centuries, and are not the writings of chance teachers, but of those publicly recognised as the greatest and most orthodox theologians. Now all the Fathers agree to a singular degree on matters of doctrine, as if they drew their learning from one unfailing source. The very earliest, it is true, are indistinct about most doctrines, but far from saying anything which could condemn the definitions of their successors, they hint at those things which are drawn out and defined later. This indistinctness is easily to be accounted for. Jesus Christ had but just left the earth, and all tributary doctrines must pale, though existing and as necessary then as now, before the great reality of His Life and Mission. We see the same in individual saints of all ages, who are very near to Christ by their great faith; though taking and benefiting by all tributary doctrines, they are lost in the one great idea. While the faithful were so immersed in this one great belief (accepting, as I believe, all the other doctrines as necessary, and as the perfection of that belief), why lead them and bind them to it in writing in a way required when faith was colder? As faith gets colder, doctrine must be more explicit; St. Irenœus might be more explicit in his definitions than St. Ignatius, and St. Ignatius more so than St. Paul—but then is not St. Paul more so than Christ himself? Besides, all these epistles of the first century (and I think the same holds good about the inspired epistles) were addressed to Churches that had but few doubts regarding matters of doctrine, but required

much exhortation regarding matters of practice. Could we not see an illustration of this any day ? In a place where the congregation is simple in its belief, doctrinal matters would not be much touched on by the preacher, except so far as they must come into the life of every Christian ; and even then he would only allude to what they had known from their childhood and never disputed. If, on the contrary, the congregation is surrounded and infected by ideas that the preacher considers erroneous, he is sure not only to condemn those ideas, but also to travel backwards and forwards in his sermon along the various roads which lead from the first cause to the final aim of each particular doctrine which he considers to be attacked. This illustration cannot exactly apply, as from the earliest times the Christians were set down in the midst of Paganism, and for this very reason we see that those doctrines that are most clearly drawn out are those most opposed to the old pagan belief. There are some passages in the earliest Fathers which are what I may call, as strongly Catholic as any later, and these passages were specially called for to correct some seeds of heresy or discord. All the writings, from the very earliest, convey an unmistakeable idea of a visible Church, with great authority, and special means of grace.

All that I have said only applies to the very earliest Fathers. In the writings of St. Irenœus and of Tertullian, to whom the earliest Fathers lead up, and both of whom wrote in the second century, the whole machinery of Christian doctrine is seen developing, having been drawn out by disputes, for by this time the Christian opponents of the Church were numerous, and St. Irenœus' book is written entirely against heretics. There are no passages which I have collected which are more Catholic than theirs. *This* is why I said that faith in the goodness of God was the only reason, and one which I thought sufficient—for thinking that the doctrine of the Fathers was the doctrine of Christ, for if ever corrupted, it was fully so 150 years after His death ! I do not think that there is one of the great Catholic doctrines which is not advocated by these representatives of the Christian

Church of the second century, in words as conclusive and explicit as those of any Catholic theologian of this century; so that if the doctrine of the latter is to be called corrupt, then must the terrible corruption of the Church not only have begun, but have been to all intents and purposes complete some 150 years after her Lord's ascension. To mention such a possibility is enough for me,—I cannot admit, I reject as disloyal, as almost blasphemous, the idea that the fair Church for the building of which He died should have fallen from Him so soon. Surely if Faith means anything, if it bids us do anything, it bids us not distrust the everlasting mercy like that! The Jews never fell without a warning, but here there was no warning. The young Christian Church, hourly shedding her blood for her Lord, was already corrupt, and did not know it! And no one to this day has been able to trace how or when she fell! Christ said that His Church was built upon a rock, but this indeed seems more akin to the house built on sand. She was not corrupt merely in her detached members, but corrupt at the very core; insomuch that those who did not join in her corruption, were stigmatised as heretics.

See what this Church of the second century taught. She taught that the teaching of the Church ought to be followed in preference to Scripture (which even then seems to have been the usual instrument used in opposition to her authority),¹ and that none but the Church could rightly understand the Scriptures,² and that those who argued only from the written word ought not to be allowed the possession of the Scriptures;³ she taught that no reformation could be so advantageous, as schism is pernicious;⁴ that all the Churches must have recourse on account of her superior headship to Rome,⁵ to that Church to which the Apostles delivered all their doctrine;⁶ she taught that the consecrated elements in the sacrament were Christ's Body and Blood,⁷ that heretics

¹ St. Irenœus.

² Tertullian.

³ Tertullian.

⁴ St. Irenœus.

⁵ St. Irenœus.

⁶ Tertullian.

⁷ St. Irenœus.—St. Justin Martyr.

could not validly consecrate them,¹ and that the sacrifice of the Mass is the pure and universal sacrifice prophesied by Malachi.² She styled those heretics who maintained that there are some sins too grave for the Church to absolve from ;³ she taught that prayers and oblations should be made for the dead, and that a widow who neglected to pray for her husband's soul might be considered as divorced from him.⁴ She taught finally that the angelic host and spirits of the prophets were worshipped,⁵ and that Mary is the advocate of our fallen race.⁶

According to all that revelation has ever taught us of a long-suffering God, we dare not think that He *would* let His precious Church fall thus so ignorantly, and silently, that none could come out of her, for they did not know that she erred. And those who did come out of her, erred worse than she did, for all denied one or other Christian doctrine. I suppose that some ignorance, because *vincible*, is guilty, but I cannot see my way to calling the ignorance of the Church of the second century guilty. No Christian living in these cold-hearted days dare criticise those splendid early Christians, pouring their martyrs out by thousands, and so drunk with the love of God that they seemed raised above the level of humanity, both in their lives and in their deaths ; and these were they who had fallen, and we half-hearted men possess the truth ! ! !

Besides saying that such a silent fall was impossible because the just and most merciful God could not (so to speak) let it be so, I do not see how, humanly speaking, it was possible that all these false doctrines should have sprung up unbeknown. There they stand, some half dozen false (if false) doctrines, totally distinct one from the other, one, as far as I can see, not leading to the other. How did each separate one spring up unseen, for we cannot find the origin of any single one ? Perhaps, for I do not know, we may find the writing where such and such a doctrine is positively mentioned for the first time, but it is not mentioned as a new assertion, but is rather alluded to, and

¹ St. Irenæus.

² See page 55.

³ St. Justin Martyr.

² St. Irenæus.

⁴ Tertullian.

⁶ St. Irenæus.

as far as we can see, it is not disputed. That is to me a very grave question. Why are not the doctrines disputed 150 years after our Lord's Ascension ? We all know what a careful lookout for heresies was kept by the early Church ; so close, indeed, was the watch, that some have accused the Christian Fathers of having by the subtlety of their distinctions between orthodoxy and unorthodoxy, given birth to heresies which otherwise would never have been born. This being the case, I cannot see how any one of these doctrines (and how much less all of them) could have sprung up without giving rise to a vehement controversy. Yet the writers who uphold them were accepted by the body of the Church as the orthodox teachers.

While we cannot find their doctrines treated as corruptions and innovations, we find a calm condemnation of those who denied them. St. Ignatius, whom tradition points out as the child whom Jesus took and placed in the midst of the Apostles, and who was the disciple and friend of these Apostles, who lived a glorious life for Christ, and at the end died a glorious death for Him,—he boldly, and as far as we can see, undisputedly by the Church, styles those heretics who denied the Real Presence in the Eucharist. One of the doctrines of the Montanists, called heretical by the orthodox of the second century, was that impurity and idolatry were too heavy sins for the Church to absolve from ; and in the third century Novatian was equally condemned for asserting the same of murder and apostacy. We find St. Jerome condemning Vigilantius, Porphyry, and others, because they rejected the doctrine of the veneration of the saints ; and St. Augustine accuses Arius of being the first who ever denied the use of prayers for the dead. There are probably many other similar cases which I have never come across.

With regard to the second question, *i.e.*, whether what is now taught by the Catholic Church is the same as was taught by the early Church, all that I can say is, that out of the large quantity of extracts which I have made from the Fathers, there is not a single one which could not, I should say, be used by a Catholic to explain the various articles of his faith. I have extracts from almost every Father, and though I have read but few of the early

Christian writings as a whole, I cannot imagine anything which those works might contain—excepting a formal retraction of these passages—which could alter my conviction that the meaning they wished to convey was the simple and literal one which I have taken. For what they have said, in these passages, they have said, and that so positively, that were there, in their writings, to be a seeming contradiction (not a retraction) of what was elsewhere said, one would be forced, out of mere self-defence, if one did not wish to look on the Father in question as a liar or simpleton or both, to adopt that passage as literal which best embraces the other, giving the other its due meaning. Say, for instance (I do not know that there is such a case, but suppose it), that a Father lays down positively in one place that the Eucharist is in very deed the Body and Blood of Christ. (and passages are not wanting to that effect), and that in another place he says that it is not *the* Body and Blood, I could better merge the latter into the former, than do the contrary. The first statement is so startling, that unless a man had meant it he would not have said it. I find no difficulty in making that passage embrace the other; for I should think that this last was called for by the people he addressed. I should suppose that they were carnally-minded, may be scoffers, such as there are now, who required to be reminded that they were wrong, if they thought they could have the doctrine neatly at their tongues' end, whether for belief or dispute, for there is so much behind the veil unknown to the most spiritual man, that in this sublime and awful mystery man must not, cannot, attempt to describe and criticise, but can only believe and adore. This is supposing an extreme case, but do we not find in the Gospel a parallel more extreme when our Lord lays down once that He and the Father are One, and in another place that the Father is greater than He? What seeming contradiction can be more complete than this? And yet we Christians find no difficulty in reconciling the two, giving chief weight to the more startling words, but knowing that the others have deep meaning, and are necessary to give full mystical meaning to the first.

I am, however, probably creating for myself obstacles that

have never existed; and may be the difficulty lies, not in passage contradicting passage, but in the general tone of the book not equalling the definiteness of certain passages. For I am far from saying that there is no difficulty, or that to read the Fathers is sufficient reason to become a Catholic straight off. As I have had but little opportunity of reading the early writings, and that only in translations, I am obliged to judge of the impression likely to be conveyed by them, by that which is actually produced on those who, studying the Fathers without prejudice, found their faith exactly on what they conclude was the faith of the Fathers, and on nothing else. So when I see that the faith arrived at by these is not exactly the Catholic faith (though so much akin to it that it seems to lookers on that they could and ought to be one with her in faith), I am obliged, against my own limited observations, to conclude that the Church of the Fathers was anyhow not apparently entirely like the Catholic Church of the nineteenth century. And I own that such works as I have read as a whole produced just this effect on me at first. Even though they contained the most startlingly Catholic passages, yet the general spirit of the book was not *quite* Catholic; even though the first principles of her faith were there laid down as strongly as could be. All the characteristics of Protestantism, such as schism, private judgment, the taking of the Bible as the sole rule of faith, were so unmeasurably condemned, that there was no possibility of the Fathers leading me to *that*. It was in the ultra high Anglican theory of the Church that I saw most likeness to the Church of the Fathers, and with this theory I rested satisfied for a little while, abiding with the English Church, not as a protest against the Roman Catholic Church, but somehow feeling as if she (looked at, as I looked, through the spectacles of some few of her members) were part of and the same as the Catholic Church; and I thus set present qualms at rest, though I always almost unconsciously looked on the Catholic Church as my final object.

I cannot say that I have ever entered minutely or independently into the grounds on which the Anglican

Church claims partnership with the Catholic Roman Church. That portion of the English Church which sets itself up against the Catholic Church, and claims to be pure while she is corrupt, I can understand; but that portion is a mystery to me which is recent of growth, and whose strength lies in claiming to be identical with her, sharing with her all the mystical gifts and graces so emphatically renounced by Protestants. I do not speak scoffingly, for to be one and the same with the Catholic Church is a noble ambition, and for those who are so persuaded it is very comfortable, and I wish that their persuasions on the subject were mine. I cannot say so really, much as such a persuasion would spare me, for that faint conception of the majesty and mysticism of God's Church, which now seems to give a height to all existence, to my own as well, would be terribly lowered by the possibility of such a thing. This one inharmonious corner in the City of God would prevent it from taking possession of me as it does. As I said before, I have never independently entered into the details of the grounds of the Anglican claim of identity; and the theory that apostolical succession is a sufficient bond of unity and union, regardless of separation, may be, as Dr. Newman says, the most difficult form of dissent to disprove. There is, however, that in me, which, rightly or wrongly, positively forbids my instinct, my reason, even my old enemy, common sense, from admitting the possibility of such a thing.

I judge from what I see. I judge from the fruits of Anglicanism, which are more the fruits of Protestantism than of Catholicism, or (if not synonymous, which I believe them to be) of the Church of the Fathers. How can I regard the English Church, as *the* Church, or part of the Church founded on a rock, against which God promised the gates of Hell should not prevail; which He prayed the Father should be one, even as They were One; to which He promised the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, on which that Spirit descended, and which is called the House of God, the pillar and the ground of truth? Can I look upon this poor tottering house of sand, in which no two men hold the same doctrine, because there is no one doctrine to be held to,

as *that* Church ? Has she any power to prevent disunity, to root out errors, and cast them from her ? No, they thrive all the more, because of her feeble efforts to stifle them ! They creep closer and closer to her till she owns she cannot reject them, and at last they are incorporated into her, each error fruitful of a hundred others,—each one increasing in rebellion and unfaithfulness to the Christ, whose pure Church she is in theory. No argument brought forward to prove that she is not what she seems to be can affect me. It is all very well for earthly things to be proved by neat reasoning, but as I believe there to be one way and word of truth, so I believe there to be one way and word of error. I cannot lower my ideas of the Almighty's greatness so far as to search for what is truth, and what is untruth in minute particulars. Truth must be great, and set on a hill ; and so must error. And shall the tardy conviction of a certain number of individuals change all this ? For what is the Anglican School but a number of individuals, entering on what I own looks like a forlorn hope, almost alone out of many contending, and in some cases, anti-christian sects, condemned by their Church, which they uphold as the true partner of Rome ? It seems to me that they are always conscious of the false position they are in, for whenever I read the books of that School, or hear of their acts, I feel that there is a great want of reality, as if they did not act spontaneously, according to what they are and could not help being, but according to what they wish to prove themselves to be. They are always fighting against odds to maintain their theory in the midst of the multitude of those whom they know, and own to be, in fact their co-religionists ; but who, according to them, are living and believing in direct opposition to the theory of their creed.

I do not wish to write, and hope I have not written, lightly about them ; but I have written thus strongly, because I once clung to them, and tried to keep my hold after all power of clinging had left me.¹ Moreover this theory of the Anglican

¹ And yet I only waited to know for certain what was the real teaching of the Catholic Church on the subject, to have all doubts removed from my mind. The first years of my journey Romewards, though I felt that the Anglican Church was

Church even still comes between me and my rest. Had I been born a member of any other separate sect but the Anglican, I should never have had a difficulty in deciding, to my own satisfaction, between truth and untruth, and this, may be, entirely on the strength of the Fathers' writings. If I came by them to the conclusion (and if I trusted to them how could I do otherwise) that the Church was infallibly true, and alone held the sacraments as means of grace, I should at once have turned to the Roman Church as the great representative of those doctrines, who has unswervingly maintained them till now. When, however, being born a member of the Church of England, I discover, late in my life, that she claims to be not Protestant (which I had always been brought up to believe was her chiefest boast) but Catholic, and to have never separated in essentials from Rome, I feel put into a fix; for no one can *prove* that such separation as hers severed the chain of divine grace; and the gifts bequeathed by Christ to His Church, and which are what draw me most powerfully Romewards, may still be lodged in her, profaned, because ignored, by the majority, but uninjured in themselves by the profanation and ignorance of individuals. This possibility leaves no doubt in my mind as to the wish to become a Catholic, and the very doubt that exists on the subject leaves the duty of the step unchanged, but it at times shakes my idea of its imminent necessity. Though the chain of grace in the Anglican Church is but a possibility, still it *is* a possibility; and when I think how much would hang on my submission to the Roman Church, it is no wonder I cling to this straw! That the Catholic Roman Church is the real representative of Christ's Church I have no doubt at all, for she alone bears all the marks of the true Church, and I feel as strongly as I can feel anything, that all those who have separated from her (whether intentionally or accidentally, whether they carried with them Christ's gifts or not), have sinned deeply, in that they have rent the seamless garment. I could no more rest in the English

wrong, I did not know that Anglican orders were even a disputed point. The doubt about them came to me from within long before, nearly two years before, I could ascertain what view of them was taken by the Catholic Church.

Church, than I would by preference lodge in a sucker of the mustard tree of the parable, which to ignorant eyes bore no likeness to the parent tree, but which botanists told you was all the same thing. There may be a theological union between Rome and England, but then are all we Christians to split straws before we arrive at the faith and food of our souls? It does indeed require to be deeply versed in theology and history to call the Anglican Church an integral part of the Roman Church. No, I certainly was not taught a lie when told that she was Protestant. I do not say that the formal separation took place at first, for that is the disputed point; but that it never took place I cannot see; else why did men of the Church of England die at the stake, rather than have any dealings with Rome? How was the Mass, the centre of Catholic devotion, the present bond between Rome and England,—how was that called in the Articles a blasphemous fable,—and how is it that for so long the Church of England has without remonstrating been hailed as the champion of Protestantism? The separation must have taken place at some time or another. The writings of the Fathers may contain actual passages against the present claims of the Catholic Church (which I never heard of their doing, and do not believe to be the case), but I feel quite sure that there is nothing against them so strong and vehement, as there is against what forms the origin and very existence of the Church of England.

Do the Fathers then condemn everything that exists now? Is the truth dead? They condemn the schism, at least, of the Anglicans—the heresy of Protestants: and as I said myself at the beginning, the Church of the Fathers does not seem even to me to be exactly what the Catholic Roman Church claims to be.

So is one forced to admit that Truth has died a natural or unnatural death?

Thank God, No. According to the Fathers the Church's chief attribute was that she could not die, that she would survive all schisms and heresies; so according to them the Church must be still alive, and for those who will see it, I believe her to exist in

the Roman Catholic Church—for none other can claim the right. If she teaches doctrines that the Fathers did not teach, and if she is *more* mighty in her functions—*more* definite in her gifts,—what of that? Why should it not be? Why should not this increase in wisdom and stature be the same in the Mystical Body as it was in the Natural Body of Christ? I often think it strange that by what is, I suppose, mere common sense, I arrived of myself (without having then even heard of such a solution to the difficulty) at the idea of the development of doctrine. I applied the same explanation to later centuries, that I had already applied to the first 150 years. As I have said above, when I felt that the whole Church could not have become noiselessly corrupt in that short time, I accounted for the apparent growth between St. Irenæus and St. Ignatius, and between St. Ignatius and St. Paul, by fuller explanations and definitions being required as time went on, when doctrines were challenged which had at first been a matter of simple belief. In this same way I accounted for the writers of the fifth century being more explicit than those of the second. Why stop there? Was it not natural that error and doubt should increase in proportion as the world removed from its first fervour? And would not one expect that challenging should cause the various doctrines to be more sharply defined, as the case called for it? I saw no more difference, if I could call it so, between the present day and St. Irenæus, than between him and St. Paul; nay, as I said before, no more than between St. Paul and Christ Himself. If faith bade me and enabled me to see that there might have been a gradual development in 150 years, why should all have remained stationary for 1700 years?

I need scarcely say that now I see no *difference* between first, second, or nineteenth centuries. Just as by long studying an effect of colour you get to see subtleties of shade and actual colours, which you did not at first know were there, so have I, by long looking at the early writings, inspired as well as uninspired, got to see many subtle allusions to the Catholic Church. In reading the New Testament all now tends to confirm me in my present idea of the Church, and I see her everywhere.

May be, I see her at times where she was not alluded to ; but still if you take it for granted that she was the only Christian system, and that all centred in her, so that when the Apostles thought and wrote about the high mysteries of God, their thoughts *must* have rested on her, as part of all high things known, all, be it doctrinal or devotional, maxim or narrative, parable or miracle, all gets a new meaning ; and far from Holy Writ contradicting the Church's present claims, each word strengthens them, and you are no longer surprised at the quick development of the Church.

To return, however, to my first discovery of the doctrine of development. Once I feebly grasped it, not only did all become plain as noonday, but it seemed to add a grandeur and completeness to the Divine organization of the Church. Not only, I found, does the Holy Ghost dwell in her so as to make her true once for all, and to consecrate the gifts bestowed on her, and by her, but He dwells with Her always, so that, though being perfect from the first, she may, as it were, move on ceaselessly, as the world moves ; having a childhood such as man has, and slowly developing into a "perfect man." He dwells with her, so as to bless the early stage of simple faith, so as to keep her pure during the next stage of dispute and doubt, and finally, in the last triumphant stage, so as to define each doctrine infallibly.

The more I look at all other Christian Creeds beside the Catholic Creed, the more do I see the finger of man in them, and the finger of God in her, and if for any moment my faith in her gets shaken, I feel cold and dismal, I feel *small* and cramped, as if the most Highest were suddenly diminished. Out of her there is a sense of unrest and incompleteness, a want of harmony, of beauty. It is as if there were no connection, taken in every sense of the word, between man and his Maker ; and as if in this creation of harmony and order, one thing had been left untouched by the Creator of harmony and order, and that is the whole system by which man reaches God. And then I look again at the Catholic Church, and there, praised be God, I see the Maker's Hand, and with so much of the great God can I be

content, and do my life's work with meaning and courage, until I may see Him face to face.

IV.

As I enter on the fourth section, which for want of a more comprehensive name, I have headed as the History of the Church (for I am far from being able, or even anxious to make a review of the Church's History), I feel a qualm that I have begun to tread on ground that is too difficult for me. I see before me such a vast mass of subjects, which I have been obliged to gather together under one head, that I scarcely feel capable of stringing them together, so that they may tell as a continuation of what has already gone before ; and I would willingly stop where I am. Were I, however, to do so, the task I set myself (that of unravelling for my own satisfaction what I believe, and why I believe), might as well have never been begun, for besides that the very difficulty I find in laying this part of my subject plainly before me, is a sign that this part, beyond all others, needs clearing up, I feel that this last clause is to me the most important. It contains more that carries conviction with it than either of the others, or rather it completes the others, and gives a meaning to them, in the same way that a moral gives a meaning to a fable, or an illustration to a proverb, and it gives a certainty and tangibility such as is given to a theory by an experiment. The other three sections have been but three degrees in the proposing of an enigma, each one working up nearer to the solution, and this fourth it is that gives me the final solution. The contents of the three first sections lead me to feel that the Catholic Church *must* be all that she claims to be, while that which must be contained in this last, shows me by signs and proofs (to me as positive, as any can be, relating to anything essentially mystical and mysterious in its nature) that she *is* what she claims to be.

The difficulty of the subject is not all that makes me hesitate. The delicacy of the ground on which I have begun to tread frightens me, for I know that in the history of all that has been done in the Church lie on one side the most formidable

weapons that can be used against her, and therefore against the unity of Christendom ; and that they have kept more people out of her than any other weapons. They have been as powerful in the hands of ignorant declaimers, as in the hands of the most learned controversialists ; and while they too readily pierce those through and through who wish ill to the Church, and wish to be pierced, they find their way into the hearts of those who wish her well, and wish her to be true, and there they form poisonous wounds. They even contrive to strike those who are convinced by all arguments that she *must* be true, and make them feel in spite of themselves that she cannot be true. I am here alluding to myself. Until comparatively quite lately I was at times, and once always, haunted by this feeling. I dreaded reading about the Church's history ; stories about her doings used to pierce me through and through, upset all my convictions, and set me at sea for days together ; for they made me feel that somehow the illustration did not agree with the proverb, nor did the experiment prove the theory. Now they do. My whole view of the Church's history has gradually changed ; I would not avoid looking steadily at it, even though it were to pierce me through and through, and prove that what I thought Divine was at best human, or at worst devilish. As I looked, its character changed, and while I waited to be stabbed through and through, a redoubled conviction came.

Leaving these former doubts of mine at rest for the present, I will do my best, and plunge at once into the difficult subject.

Beyond and above all other reasons which first drew me towards the Catholic Church, and then on through all the various stages of my search after truth, and which most powerfully kept me to her, I can clearly distinguish this :—All the early part of my life I firmly believed the Catholic Church to be an instrument of evil ; in fact, an engine of the power of evil ; and as such, as far as I was capable, I appreciated her might and magnitude. When I went abroad in the autumn of 1863, being then old enough, and inclined to look at her with my own eyes, I appreciated her might and magnitude a hundredfold, not however in the same way as formerly ; for with this sense of

her importance (which of all things was what first struck me about her), grew up a conviction that she was not as evil as I had always thought her. The increased idea of her greatness, which forbade me to assign any neutral position to her, growing up alongside of the conviction that this greatness was not the power of the spirit of evil, led to a very natural result: I soon got to think that she was *very good*. Even before I arrived at Rome, this conviction (utterly undefined as it was for a long time even after that) had taken fast hold on me; and while I was at Rome, weight and pointedness were given to the conviction, by the way that what she taught, and how she taught, appealed to me personally, and filled all the spiritual wants of my soul. I have, already, in the first part of this Paper, attempted to show by what means she appealed; so I have no intention of entering further into that part of the subject. My present business is with that first primary cause of my inclination towards the Catholic Church, which, I repeat, is still the one thing on which I can most easily lay my hand, as binding my faith to the Church.

I will not hear of the Catholic Church being one of many forms of Christianity, innocent and harmless, to be followed at choice. She is too great and obtrusive, too powerful and startling in her nature, not to be everything one way or the other. I will almost as soon hear of Christianity being one of many given forms of religion.

It is those who in a way know the Church best (be their knowledge the result of love or of hatred), who feel her to be supernatural in origin and guidance; some maintaining her to be supernaturally founded and guided for evil, others for good. I dare maintain that no man, men, or even generations of men, —much less chance,—could so have guided this vast world-wide machine, as to make it work steadily and consistently century after century, always tending unswervingly towards one object, and now as full of life as ever; springing up with young vigour when men think it has received its death-blow; and as it loses its hold on one part of the world, stretching out its ever-ready arms and drawing men into it. It alone, of all creeds, makes

its way into every country and every sphere of life ; wins men of every kind of nature, and in whatever state of civilization ; penetrates into countries where the faith is to be preached and embraced at peril of death, and so takes souls by storm, that its converts die but too willingly, intoxicated by the soul satisfyingness of its system. And somehow it finds its way back into countries long separated from its rule ; and receives back ever increasing numbers into its fold. At one time it seemed to be so reduced as to make its proud name of Catholic a mockery ; but now it seems to be spreading its net-work over the world again ; not, indeed, as once, by all men who call themselves Christians being in submission to its faith, but by the strong footing it has gained in every land ; so that when its head calls its bishops round him, there is no land unrepresented. When branches tear themselves from this grand tree, if they do not wither and die out, as in the case of the separatists of old, they lose their character, so that those who tore them off would scarcely recognise them ; while the parent tree goes on, not only putting out branches in the place of those lost to her, but putting out buds and leaves just like those that bloomed hundreds of years ago.

Its history is not that of a chance means of good or evil springing up for no particular purpose. All through the history of Christianity two broad contending parties are to be seen—the Church and the Anti-Church parties,—the first represented by the Roman Church, the latter by all the numerous Christian sects opposed to her from the beginning until now. These two vital principles being opposed to one another all throughout, what can we do but choose between them ? Each principle means so much, involves so much, that I say that not only must one be very good and the other very bad, but the one can no more be accidentally good than the other can be accidentally bad. I know that many would call me narrow-minded for judging thus, in a matter like this. I cannot help that. I can only say that the possibility, the necessity of such a distinction, grows in strength in me. In all other cases of judging between creed and creed, I feel that all certainty is most uncertain ; for the

more I love God, and therefore the more I know Him, the more do I get to feel that we must not measure His all-seeing judgment, any more than His unmeasurable mercy. So, when I look round on all manner of beliefs and unbeliefs, the less do I feel inclined to judge at all on the matter. His ways are not our ways ; and the service of these men, given in their own way, may be much more acceptable to Him than I dare think. All creeds, never mind what is added to them, or what is left out, may find mercy (nay, we know nothing), may find approval at the throne of God ; for what they have done, may be to the best of their power. All, some more, some less dimly, may be groping after *the* God, may be offering the self-same service to God, calling the service and God Himself by names of their own, and veiling their belief in many a strange garb ; some through ignorance ; others through an independent conception of the Godhead. This feeling grows in me, as my love for God and the human race grows ; but together with this wide view of the service of God grows up a terribly distinct conviction, that if the Catholic Church is not very good, she must be very bad. When I think that she calls herself Christian, and worships the God of the Christians ; and yet, when I think what her claims are, if false, I distinctly feel it impossible (veiled as is our knowledge of God) that He would do anything but at most show mercy to her.

I do not now like to think how long it was after I left Rome before I quite ceased being haunted by a misgiving that the Church was the work of the power of evil. I hope that this disloyal thought has gone for ever ; but I maintain that if ever I am persuaded that she is not what she claims to be, I must, of necessity, join the ranks of her bitterest enemies, and believe the worst that they say of her.

Surely if one had any enthusiasm for the cause of Christ, one's breath would fail before one could sufficiently denounce this blaspheming, usurping power, which so nearly raises its pretensions to divinity, as to claim to be at once the mouth-piece and special abode of God, the Holy Ghost, and to have, by His care, the deposit of Apostolic Faith intact in its guardian-

ship ; and which, with a presumption which, if unfounded, nearly equals that which caused the fall of the Angels, teaches the most hideous untruths, calling on the world to bow to them as infallibly divine. This power says it has at its head the Vicar of Christ, who pretends to hold the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and who with those to whom he imparts power, claims to remit and retain sins, and to loose souls from present and future temporal penalties. This power professes to call down Christ, the Lord of heaven, to its altars,¹ and, by certain laying on of hands, to impart to its members that very same Spirit which He breathed on His apostles. I cannot call this power merely innocent and harmless; if true, her office is unparalleled; and if false, her sin is equally unparalleled; for it seems to me that if not what she claims to be, an engine placed on this earth by a merciful God, to stay and guide us weak men, she is so damably wicked, that, by all we know of God's judgment and justice, every woe pronounced on the evil could not but be turned on her. Is not God the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ? So, how could He suffer this, who for one act of rebellion cast the angels for ever from the light of His presence, and who, for one act of disobedience, cast men from His favour ? Pray God, I may never have to see His enemy's hand in this power, which seems to me so divine.

I think, indeed, my heart would break to see such things, and to feel that once this stupendous error filled all the world, which Christ came to save; and worse, to look and see that none involved in the error knew it to be error. They honestly believed that they were following Christ, and the best, the noblest, the truest, who loved Christ with all their souls, who were ready to go to death ten thousand times over for the very least of His commands, clung to this error far more lovingly than did those who were lukewarm in their love for Him. In

¹ If there has ever existed real idolatry, it has existed in the Catholic Church (if her claims are false), as it has existed nowhere else. I doubt whether the most ignorant savages, who bow down to stocks and stones, believe them to be their actual gods ; while there is not a faithful Catholic who would not take his oath with his last breath, that when he bowed himself before the altar, he bowed to what he believed to be Jesus Christ Himself.

what mind would one ask, Why God has left these best ones of all generations, who are in error, to spend their lives zealously for Him (so they thought), and work for the cause they called His, in His name, with so much more devotion,—and may we not say, to so much more purpose than any who have since emancipated themselves from error, and who, instead of being filled with a mere semblance of the Spirit and grace as those were, are filled with them in reality. I may be mistaken, but I feel as if nowhere shall we find men who so thoroughly subdued themselves to Christ (acting only for His will) as in the Catholic Church ; and they were in error ! Either God strengthened them in their error, or else they were thus singularly subdued to Him without His help ! Or (I am almost ashamed to put such a question into words) Was it by the devil's help ? Then indeed is Satan divided against Satan ! Look at the history of the Catholic Church. Has she not rooted out all those strange Christianity, destroying heresies of all ages ? Have not her children died martyrs for the faith of Christ by scores ? Have they not preached and extended that devotion over all the world, civilized and uncivilized ? Have they not led lives of self-devotion and sacrifice for Christ, so that thousands have been drawn and bound to the faith by their example ? And these were not this strange power's half followers, but the very pick of Satan's crew ! Our blessed Lord said that a house divided against itself cannot stand, and yet this house stands as firm as ever in all the bold sublimity of its error, although its choicest servants have been fighting for Him whose enemy it is ! Yes, there stands Satan's work, digged about and entrenched, prosecuting its work in peace, unity, security, and promise ; while God's own people are wandering about astray, seeking for truth, and finding none. There can be but one truth, and which of the hundreds of ends arrived at by thirsty souls shall we call the truth ?

There are many who, after calmly looking at the history of the Church, take this last view of the case, *i.e.*, that she is the work and active instrument of the Enemy himself. I see what they mean, for, as I said, the Church's attributes

come so before me, that I must think as they do, or think her God's work and active instrument, and that far from being divided against itself in its aims, it has been steadily working towards one aim from the beginning until now. I see but the two alternatives.

I need not say which I have taken, and I have taken it, because, to say the least of it, I found it the least impossible to be taken of the two.¹

Before, however, entering further at present into what is and has been the actual good and actual bad existing in the Church, I propose looking at the world's history, since the Christian era, as a Christian and a believer in revelation, to try and lay before myself which seems the most *likely* course for Christ's Church to have taken; that which it would have taken, if the Roman Church is false, or that which it would have taken if she is true,—the facts being the same in both cases, only the motives changed.

To begin by the first view of the case, *i.e.*, that view which takes for granted that the Church is evil. Our Blessed Lord founded His Church, and we know that the Apostles taught pure doctrine. Somehow—nobody knows how or when—a strange devilish power sprang up in the heart of the Church.

¹ I do not see that the line of argument I have followed could tell for the opposite side. Protestantism need not be hideously false if not true, nor true if not hideously false. The whole idea, the whole system of Protestantism, is a negative one. Each sect (it seems to me) has erred much more by what it has left out, than by what it has added on. So that as far as it is true, and has kept what is true, it is beautiful because true, and (I am, of course, taking the view that no Protestant sect has *the* true faith) its members lead beautiful and Christian lives, by reason of the fragment of truth—be it large or small—which it has preserved. But the Catholic Church has left out nothing; all her sins, if sins, are grave, ugly sins of commission, so active in their working that the spiritual life of each of her children is based on those very doctrines, which mere common sense tells one to be false if not true. Any Catholic looking at the life of a good Protestant, can safely say that he is good, because he is a Christian, but would be much more good if only he did not reject all that part of the Christian faith which he does reject. That stands to reason,—a part is not as good as the whole, but it is better than nothing. It would, however, be quite a different case, and as I see it, would involve a Protestant in great difficulties, both of faith and reason, were he to say of a good Catholic that he is good because he is a Christian, in spite of the positive and false means he takes to be good. That is at once owning that good can come out of evil, and that he who worships, and his good intentions is all that signifies, without any regard as to who or what is worshipped.

It cannot be said that this power (very mature at its birth) took possession of the Church, for the fact of taking possession involves some commotion, but rather it found itself in undisturbed possession, in an unaccountable way, but a very short time after our Lord's ascension. Some have tried to fix dates, and some (for purposes of their own) have fixed late dates, but certainly its most arrogant and devilish doctrines were taught and embraced close to Apostolical times, and even then their beginning cannot be traced. This power, once in possession, kept possession, and silently so absorbed every other purer Christian belief, that no one would have thought that any such had existed. Every Christian creed that differed from her could be distinctly traced to having severed itself from this power, since it had so miraculously appeared, and in the severance had lost some one or other vital Christian doctrine, so that no Christian dare call it the lost pure Christianity. The noblest martyrs of Christianity died under the rule of this power; and when the time for martyrdom ceased, she was recognised as *the* representative of the triumphant faith, and in her faith all the newly-converted countries were instructed. So much was she the sole representative of Christianity, that when, as centuries rolled on, the vital doctrines of Christ were denied, one by one, she alone was found to fight against and conquer the deniers, having, by a strange inconsistency, one great aim above all others, throughout her whole existence, *i.e.*, the conquest of all deniers of Christianity.

She maintained her own power with a strong hand, and warred against those who denied her authority; but she doubly warred against those who denied the authority of Christ, whose enemy she all this time was. In all those long centuries of dominion this strange power never tried wilfully to weaken the religion, the destruction of which was the reason of her existence. Its whole history is but an endless repetition and development of the same principles, shown under different circumstances.

As the Christian world was removed by the course of time from its founders, the authority of this power became less

respected; contrary to the usual rule, judging by which, one would have expected that in the age when Christ's blessed memory was fresh, His enemy would have been hateful to all Christians, and that their allegiance to her would have grown up, as they got colder in their faith and love. As centuries rolled on it began first to be whispered by a few, and more and more took up the cry, that this Church was none of Christ's; that its head was no Vicar of His; that its gifts, far from being graces from heaven, were mere deceptions of the devil, and that the whole thing was a great delusion.

At last this smothered, sometimes exploding muttering, reached a climax 300 years ago, and a grand rebellion took place against the rule of the evil one, and half the civilized world turned against him and his handmaid. It was a tardy repentance, half of Christendom having at last, fifteen long centuries after the birth of Christianity, found out the true character of this power of evil. They said her works were devilish, so the doctrines which led to this abuse must be devilish too; so they shook the dust off their feet, and left her rule for the true Rule of Faith, which they had at last discovered.

Surely such an heroic burst of allegiance was God-pleasing; and now that His chosen ones had unburied the truth from the dust of ages, and discovered the only true unerring Rule of Faith, surely He will cherish them, and enable them to keep to it, even as the evil one had so zealously watched over *his* flock! But not so; as years went on, such divisions entered into the fold of these heroic protestors against evil, as had never been seen since Christianity first was; for the unburied, unerring Rule of Faith gave different answers, according to the man who questioned it. The light of the world, the city set on a hill, was so mist-surrounded, that men peered for it in vain. Some said, "Lo! It is here;" and others, "Lo! There;" and men went everywhere,—wheresoever it was said to be. And, meanwhile, the giant masterpiece of the Tempter went gliding on, majestic and unchanged, keeping hold on what she had as calmly as if nothing had happened to ruffle her; the number of her servants

diminished, but acting as though her strength did not consist in numbers.

Now, let me take the other side of the parallel which I proposed to draw, and follow the history of Christianity just as it was, and see what would be its character, supposing that all along the Catholic Church was Christ's own true Church.

A sense of relief comes over me as I turn to this view of the case, for all the time that I have been writing the last few pages, an undefined, indescribable feeling of discomfort has had possession of me, as if the world I was describing were all ajar, and as if I were trying to recollect a tune, and set my teeth on edge by putting every note just where it ought not to be. Everything else, in me and about me, round me and above me, was in indescribable harmony, and I seemed to be drawing a line across the harmony and cutting it asunder in every direction.

To begin the second parallel: When Christ was on earth He founded His Church, always to be one, with a centre of unity, and always to be true under Divine guidance. And mark, He very plainly prophesied that men would gradually fall away from the true faith. All men who believe the gospels, so clearly understand these predictions, that in all ages, and in all creeds, they are continually looking for signs of the "great falling away."

"Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."—(Matt. xxiv. 12.)

"When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth ?"—(Luke xviii. 8.)

False Christs and false prophets are foretold by our Blessed Lord, and the Apostles foretell the same. All agree that a great falling away from the faith is to take place in the last days, *i.e.*, at the time remotest from Christ's death. We can easily grasp this idea; it seems so natural that it should be so, that it seems to one that human nature would no longer be human nature if such an order of things were reversed. Judging, therefore, by these Divine predictions, which coincide so exactly with what mere common sense would tell one, one would expect to see the Christian world fervent, and faithful, and pure at first, and gradually falling away till the last time

that is yet to come, which will reveal the great secret, and which may, or may not, God only knows, bring a decided falling away of its own.

It is more difficult to make a sketch of the history of the Church from this point of view than from the other, for all seems so complete and well-proportioned that I hardly know on what one thing more than another to lay my hands. Say, however, that this Church, founded by Christ, built up and watered by the Apostles, suffered patiently for Christ through the ages of persecution, and that when raised to triumph at last, she spread in a marvellous way, only equalled by the way she had spread during the time of persecution. Both storm and sunshine seemed to develop her equally, and if the noblest spirit of martyrdom were less called for now, the scarcely less noble apostolic spirit flourished beautifully. This divine Church ruled Christ's flock for Him splendidly and watchfully in those early days. While she kept herself pure in her members, she sent out blessed off-shoots into every known land ; and while she thus warred far away with Christ's enemy, Paganism, she warred at home against those endless sects, who, one by one, denied every doctrine most precious to Christians. It must have been owing to her holiness and purity that God gave her such signal victory in those days ; for both enemies, through her means, perished from off the face of the earth.

As the world got removed by more centuries from its Lord, love towards Him got colder. Human interest and human passions got more sway, and a large half of the Christian Church broke from that half in which was placed the centre of unity ; being jealous of the superior authority lodged in her, and no longer vanquished by her merits. It was apparently the wisest and best half that broke away, but it lost its vital powers by the severance. As the branch fell, so it lay, keeping what it had got, but from that moment losing all power of growth and development, sinking into the position of a (vast indeed) national Church, losing all claim to universality, never spreading materially beyond its original limits, and having no influence on the history of the world. But the Church of God

went on, none the poorer for the loss she had sustained, exercising a strange unearthly influence, and increasing in wisdom and stature ; imitating (by His decree) her Divine Spouse and Lord in this, that being endowed with all wisdom from the beginning, she grew in it, year by year. Centuries rolled on, her hold being stronger first in one country, and then in another, but men had grown less entirely submissive to her. Once the heroes most clung to by Christians were the Church's greatest champions ; and the kings most idolised by the people were those most honoured by the Church. Now some of the greatest saints won their crowns by martyrdom at the hands of those who called themselves Christians, but who could not endure the authority of the Church of Christ.

As might be expected, the infallible authority of God being in the hands of frail and erring men, they, too, as a mass, grew cold towards God and sinned against Him, though their precious charge could not be injured by their corruption, any more than it could by the violence of the laity. These sins of the clergy must have been (one would think) much blacker in the eyes of the Most Highest than those of the laity ; for though, indeed, their evil ways could not injure the truth, they could (and, as it eventually proved, did, to bitter effect), cause the truth to be evil spoken of. God did not leave them unpunished. Each time they seemed to be reaching a climax of sin and corruption, He chastened them in some particular way, and brought them back to His service. The whole history of the Church is a tissue of sometimes greater, sometimes lesser fallings away, chastisements and repentance. At one time, after an epoch of terrible corruption, God suffered His Church to fall almost entirely into secular power, until the Church roused herself, proclaiming loudly, and procuring her liberty ; then profiting by the chastisement, she so repented that God removed His hand, and what may, as regards the visible Church, be called her golden age, followed. Then, when, to speak metaphorically, her head was turned by the success and honour won for her by her virtues, then no longer living, she again sunk. This time God chastened her by letting division and hatred enter into her

very heart; and when the repentance that followed this chastisement proved but short and fruitless (for faith and love were very cold then), He saw fit to sacrifice one half of the Church to loss of inestimable good, so that the other half which, though torn, remained whole, might be saved.

Eighteen hundred years ago God suffered a man to lose himself by a traitorous act, so that the world might be saved, saying, in the awfulness of His most high judgment, "It must needs be that the offence cometh, but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." By some such decree, three hundred years ago, He was pleased to draw the Church (please God, for ever) from the filth and mire into which men had plunged her. By this decree half the civilized world tore itself from the guardianship of the Church, the best of those thus severed being sick at the sins of her visible body, and the remainder anxious to cast off an authority which, faith being cold by this time, they counted to be no more than human.

For a time these men carried all with them by the vigour and reality of their piety. For a time! Not only did they gradually sink to the level of humanity, but those who ran might read that their lawless creed did not bear transmission. It both lost and gathered as it rolled. For such a Rule of Faith as private judgment could not be put into chains. As time went on, men who wished very different things to the first Reformers, applied the principle to their own case, as a means of attaining the end they wished to see attained. The first Reformers had, indeed, let loose the principle of private judgment, but at certain places they put barriers, saying, "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." As time went on the principle survived, but the barriers succumbed. "You claim to have built the barriers from and with the infallible Book," was the substance of the advanced principle of the Reformers' successors; "but why, if private judgment and reason cast aside the idea of an infallible Church as a folly and superstition, why not extend some licence to the receiving the infallible Book." And thus the principle of pulling down went on, the most

destructive ones claiming the Reformers as their fathers, nurses, tutors, and everything in the art of destruction. "J'ai fait plus dans mon temps, que Luther et Calvin," was Voltaire's boast; and who are they who boast in like manner now?

It is my firm conviction, though many of his friends would consider such a suggestion an insult, that Martin Luther little knew what he was doing. I believe he let loose a dragon in Christ's camp, little calculating on its productive and destructive powers. Who was he to judge, that because man's work was bad, God's work was bad too? And yet he saved the other half of the world! Please God, I will never throw stones, or even dust at him, for I do not know where, humanly speaking, the Church would be now if he had never lived. He did wonderful things for the cause I love best.

And, meanwhile, what line did the Church take, when, by her Lord's decree, she was thus strangely punished?

She humbly owned her sin. "We frankly admit that God has permitted this judgment to fall on His Church for the sins of men, chiefly priests and prelates of the Church," was Pope Adrian's public declaration. "We know that in this holy seat there have been many enormities now for some years past, and abuses in spiritual things, excesses in what has been ordained, all things, in short, perverted. Wherefore it is necessary that we should all give glory to God, and humble our souls before Him, and see each one of us from whence he has fallen."

The Church owned her sin by her deeds. She carefully examined every abuse of practice which had crept in; she rooted them out as much as could be, one by one, and did her best to prevent their recurrence. She sprang into sudden activity; she suddenly recollected her Lord's parting command, too long laid aside, and poured her Apostles into the discovered New World and explored Old World. She honoured virtue again, and some of her greatest saints flourished now. She profited by the terrible chastisement God inflicted on her, and as it did not please Him to remove it this time, she has, though, alas! most full of sin, gone on profiting by it, ever showing herself most nobly Christian

when times have been worst; and if times go on getting worse, she will, *I know*, go on getting more and more Christian, till it may please her Blessed Lord that when He comes to relieve her of her charge, He may find her as gloriously pure and undefiled in practice, as she ever has been in doctrine.

I find that I have gradually sunk into talking of her, as if she were really all this, instead of merely supposing it. I cannot help it! I believe so firmly that this is the only true, and the only possible, view of the history of Christ's Church.

Before I go further, I wish to copy out two prophecies of future events,—one delivered in the twelfth century, the other in the fourteenth,—which will lead me on to what I have further to say on this suppository side of the question; before I go on to look at facts as they really were and are.

The first is an extract from the prophecy of St. Hildegarde relating to Antichrist.

“And the Word having become Man, it pleased God to “establish among men a hierarchy, corresponding to that of the “Angels; the bishops, the priests, and other orders of the “Church being ordained to reproduce the divers degrees of “angelic choirs; and thus the people regenerated according to “the Spirit received honour in the eyes of God. But in the “end the same people forsook the way. They began to break “the covenant with the Holy Spirit; they neglected to attend “His precepts, that they might follow their own way, and give “themselves over to corruption of manners and doctrines, and “yield themselves up anew to the dominion of their own passions. “I who am that I am, I say to those who listen to me: when “these things shall come to pass, a people blinded by error, and “more wicked even than those who are now going astray, them-“selves deceivers, shall fall as a ruin upon the deceivers. They “shall pursue you without ever being weary; and shall bring “your own iniquities into open daylight. They shall publish “them abroad and say to you, ‘They are like scorpions in their “lives, and reptiles in their deeds.’ And puffed up with a false “zeal for the House of the Lord, they shall apply this imprecation

“ to you : ‘ The way of the wicked shall perish.’ And yet these
“ men who, stirred up and seduced by the devil, shall thus act
“ towards you, shall appear with pale calm faces and regular
“ demeanour. They will make alliances with the princes of this
“ world, and say to them, ‘ Why do you endure these impious
“ men who sully the earth with their crimes ? They are given
“ up to wine and licentiousness, and if you do not expel them
“ from the Church her ruin is sealed.’ Now the people who
“ shall thus treat you will adopt a costume different and more
“ rude than yours ; they will cut their hair in another style, and
“ appear before the eyes of men most holy, and of irreproach-
“ able lives ; for they are not misers, they heap not up treasures,
“ but make profession of great austerity. And yet the devil is
“ with them, concealing his poison as he did at the beginning of
“ the world, when he occasioned the fall of Adam. Those who
“ at this time shall have become weak in faith, will be caught in
“ the snare of this seeming piety. They will lend their servile
“ aid to the attempts of the innovators, and will imitate them as
“ much as possible ; they will become attached to them because
“ they believe them to be just, and will join them in persecuting
“ those wiser men, who persevere in the faith. Amongst these
“ there will be very courageous soldiers ; but congregations of
“ pure lives will not be seduced, for we shall see the accomplish-
“ ment of the words of Elias, ‘ Many of the just shall be pre-
“ served.’ And as they have not embraced these errors, their
“ foundations shall not be torn up : as says the Lord : ‘ Iniquity
“ shall be purged out by iniquity ; ’ for it is needful that sorrow
“ and contrition shall purify the works of man ; for it must
“ needs be that offences come, but, nevertheless, woe to that man
“ by whom the offence cometh. Now these seducers are not
“ they of whom it is said, that they shall follow Satan when at
“ the last day he shall rise even up to heaven, and make him-
“ self like as God, as he did at the beginning ; they will only be
“ the bud, as it were, and the precursors of them. But the Sun
“ of Justice will arise at last, and better days will dawn for you.
“ Past evils will make you more vigilant, and inspire you with
“ the fear of God. You will shine anew like pure gold ; and

" you will strengthen yourselves in the blessed state ; and you " will be as firm as the Angels, who were confirmed in love by " the fall of Lucifer."

The other prophecy I referred to, was uttered by St. Catherine of Siena, in a conversation with Blessed Raymond of Capua, her confessor, and is recorded by him in his life of the Saint. He relates that as one day he was deplored to her a certain rebellion in the Pope's territories, she said :

" Do not begin to mourn so soon, you have too much to " weep for ; for this which you see is milk and honey compared " to that which is to come. ' What, O Mother ! ' said Raymond, " can we see a worse evil than that Christians should have so " lost all respect and devotion towards the Holy Church, as not " to fear her censures ? Nothing else remains but that the Faith " of Christ be utterly denied ! ' Then said Catherine, ' O " Father ! the laity do so now, but you will see how much worse " things will be done by the clergy,' and Raymond said, ' Oh, " misery ! and, will the clergy also rebel against the Roman " Pontiff ? ' and she :—' You will see how, when he shall try to " mend their bad ways, they will cause a universal scandal to " the whole Holy Church of God, which shall divide and trouble " her like a plague of heresy.' ' O Mother,' said Raymond, " ' and shall we have heresy and new heretics ? ' ' It will not " be heresy properly so-called,' said Catherine, ' but it will be " nearly heresy, and a certain division of the Church and of all " Christendom. Prepare yourself for patience, for it behoves " you to see such things.' After that Raymond had pondered for awhile, plunged in grief at the prediction which he saw so faithfully fulfilled in the great Schism of the West, he asked Catherine : ' Tell me pray, dear Mother, what will happen " in the Church after all these misfortunes ? ' ' These tribulations, " and this anguish over,' said she, ' God will purge His Church by " a way not easily understood by men. He will re-awaken the " Spirit of the elect, and there will then be such a great refor- " mation in the Church of God, and a renewal of holy pastors, " that at the very thought of it my soul rejoices in the Lord ; " and as I have often told you, this spouse, now so deformed

“ and ill-clothed, will be beautiful and adorned with precious stones, and crowned with the diadem of every virtue, and all the faithful people shall rejoice to see themselves governed by such holy pastors: and people still unfaithful (drawn by the sweet savour of Jesus Christ), will return to the Catholic Fold, and will be converted to the True Shepherd and Faithful Guardian of their souls. Give thanks to God! because, after the storm, He will give a great calm to His Church.”

I have made these extracts, lengthy as they are, for they struck me very much. Those holy women lived at one end of a chain of events, towards the other end of which I feel that I am living. I believe them to be very likely real prophecies, and I will say no more than that now, for I intend later to unravel my ideas on the miraculous gifts of the Saints. It is of the deepest interest to me to think that I, living in the nineteenth century, should of my own self, have read the past and present in just the same light, as they read the same space of time still future to them. So I have not extracted these passages as a proof of anything, but merely as a satisfaction to myself, and as a help towards the unravelling process. Indeed, such sentiments as I am going to describe are altogether foreign to my self-imposed purpose in writing these pages; for such conjectures and ideas could not go very far in persuading me of the truth of the Catholic Faith; though I will not deny that once I believe enough to look candidly at the History of the Christian Church from a Catholic point of view, the course that History has taken, is taking, and to all appearances will take, conduces not a little to confirming me in my belief.

To return to the two prophecies, which I enlarge on for the simple reason that they say things I should wish to say, only a great deal better. We can trace the same idea in both writings. After the account of the Schism of the West in the last quoted, both Saints evidently refer to the same course of events. St. Catherine only says that God will chasten the Church by a means not easily understood of men; whilst St. Hildegarde devotes most of her prophecy to a description of the chastisement. Both treat of this chastisement as the beginning of a peculiar

epoch for the Church ; and both, without fixing times or seasons, allude to it as the herald of what may be called the golden age of the Church. That adversity at the hands of Christ's enemies will be the means of purification, St. Hildegarde gives to be understood by saying, that the authors of the great chastisement are the buds and precursors of the Anti-Christian Rebellion, which is to precede the Second Advent of Christ.

Far be it from me, even in the vagueness of my own mind to fix any dates, even by centuries ; but as every one may have a conviction, my conviction is that we are near the beginning of the end.

It is but the few who feel that the world is going on just as it always has gone on ; the many seem to have an inner conviction that a great time of one sort or other is beginning. I have the conviction so strongly that my heart beats with excitement when I think of it ; for I think we are about to enter the golden time predicted by the two Saints. We may not have entered it yet, for I am far from thinking that the partial, though constantly increasing reform of the Church since the Reformation, can be more than a foretaste of what is to come. God knows, and those who best love the Church feel most acutely, what a mass of impurity, superstition, deceit, and self-seeking must still be swept away before she can be called pure ; but if not yet entered on that glorious time, I feel that we are on the threshold. It may be hundreds of years before all is ripe, but still I think it is beginning, and if ever I had been given my choice of a time to live in, now is the time I would have chosen !

In the recesses of my heart I look for two things to be complete before the end (not that I, or any alive, shall, in all human probability, live to see their maturity). First, that the world should be divided into two main parties,—for Christ, and against Him—no delusion any longer—no mistakes. Those who wish well to Christ's cause will be ranged under His Standard ; and those who wish ruin to it will be as openly against Him. The Christian Army may end by being very small, but it will be compact and united. Secondly, I look that the Christian Army should be pure and lovely ; that owning Christ's pure

doctrine, and possessing all the means of grace, it should practice the one, and show forth the other ; so that none shall be able to say in excuse for unfaithfulness, that they doubted the glory of the Master, because of the foulness of the livery of His servants.

I need not say that to my mind this noble Christian Army can only be the Catholic Church. It is because I see the beginning, only the beginning, of both these ends, that I feel we are on the threshold of great and glorious days. I (and how many thousands more) scent it, as the camel in the desert scents water—because I am thirsty.

To begin by the last point first : I think the purifying of the Church began 300 years ago, and she has gone on being purified ever since, because the means of her purification has never ceased acting. Its activity has made giant strides latterly, and so I think has her purification. The world is retreating more and more from the Catholic Church ; she is ridiculed by the majority, bitterly hated by a vast number, disregarded even by those who call themselves her children, and even where her authority is as a rule (for I am not now speaking of individuals) most respected, it is not what it was, comparatively, but a short time ago. She is not, it is true, persecuted in the common sense of the word ; but who can deny that her earthly lot is, in most cases, that of the weakest of two antagonists ? And, as times get worse, her purification will march rapidly, for she profits by adversity, with a speed and with fruits belonging only to the servants of God. So I rejoice when I hear of country after country turning against her in its own way, for I feel that each new event of this description is a step towards the final end. They draw her in more ways than one close to her blessed Lord, because for every bitter word said against her principles, in every age of the Church, I can find a parallel in *His* history. I should not recognise His work and spouse if she were acceptable to the world. “Ye shall be hated of all men, for My name’s sake.” Every blow aimed at her, every thorny crown put on her, every robe of mocking deference, every scoffing word levelled at her, every nail driven into her, every bitter cup given her to drink, makes me more and more sure of her nature and origin.

“ If they have persecuted Me, they will much more persecute you.” If they say her works are the works of the devil, did they not say so to Him? If they say she is gluttonous and a winebibber, the friend of publicans and sinners, so said they to Him, and much more also. The more troubles meet her, the more will I believe in her; the less hold she has on the world, the more hold will I believe God to have on her. I will not cease to believe her to be Christ’s Catholic, Infallible Church, even if she ends as she began, by being composed of only twelve poor men. I should regret to hear of honour and glory being heaped upon her, for past ages have too sadly taught us, that the vessels chosen by God for His inestimable, unchangeable gifts, are very human. When I look at what the Church in France is, even now, in the way of holiness—when I look at what it is in England—even in America, where she has not been persecuted, but only not honoured by the multitude, I feel that it will only require circumstances to make her such as is described by St. Hildegarde and St. Catherine. And time marches very quick now. If I live to the ordinary life of man, I may see great changes in the position of the Church towards the World.

The beginning of the other thing I look for is less evident, but thousands see its germs as clearly as I do. The Catholic Church stands more prominently forward than she has since the Christian world was split up. She has not a faster hold on the world than she had, for her hold, as I have just been maintaining, is weakened; but I mean that more eyes are turned towards her; she stands more forward as a great recognised representative of Christianity. She is not recognised as the representative, else the work would be done. Those who most powerfully condemn her; those who could do her most hurt, condemn her, and would hurt her, not as erring Christianity, but as Christianity—as old fashioned, superannuated Christianity, *i.e.*, 1800 years old. These are the enemies of Christianity; but even Christians outside the Church, look at her with different eyes from what they did. They *tolerate* her! And why? Because they see worse enemies of Christ about, and are

obliged to see that she is not His arch-enemy of all enemies ! Now I believe it is not in the nature of the Catholic Church to be tolerated. She must be, and hitherto always has been, the worst enemy or none at all ; and I believe that (God only knows when) the Christian world will end by doing as I did, *i.e.*, begin by discovering that she is not very bad, and as a necessary result end by thinking her very good ! And the other thing I look for, and see so plainly, the decline of her prosperity, will conduce to this end. Surely when each loving Christian sees her bear the brunt of the attack on what he loves best, he must get to think her not only not an enemy, but a friend indeed ! Finally, all can see that her own children, such as, scattered over Christendom, really do love her, draw near to her, and cling to her with a love and purpose they never had before. She has always had true lovers, but I feel as if her lovers of to-day (and how much more then of to-morrow) cling to her with a reasoning and yet passionate love, as if they knew now what they owe her, and what she is to them, as they never knew it before. Truly she is their precious, firm, immovable mother, full of consolation, to which they can lovingly cling, while the whole wide world is in commotion round them !

It is now time that I left this visionary side of the subject, which I should never have entered into, if it did not occupy such a large place in my mind, and did not act so powerfully on me, as one of the motives that urge me on towards Catholicism. Now, however, it is time I turned to the practical side of the question.

I have in this section hitherto been occupying myself about whether (the History of Christianity having been such as it has been) it were more natural that the Catholic Church should be good or evil ; now I propose advancing a step further, and asking myself, with the hope of giving myself a satisfactory answer, whether, judging by her fruits, she has been, and is, the work of good, or the work of evil. I will begin by the dark side first, and see whether, even looking exclusively at it, her actions were such as to exclude her from being God's own Church.

Who can overlook the monstrous abuses which from time to

time have shown themselves in the Church ! They may have been much exaggerated, and judging by the way slanderous stories are invented, circulated, and believed in the world, I should judge that a large portion of the horrors that have been handed down to us is not worthy of belief. Still, there is no smoke without a fire, and even though the horrible abuses may not have existed in the accumulated, undistinguishable mass, that some would lead us to believe, yet we know that there have been such shameful abuses of prerogative and in practice, that one shudders at the thought, and feels in one's calmest moments, that one day when all sinners must answer for their sins, none will have a heavier account than those who caused these scandals. Not only did they make of "none effect" God's maxim, "Unto whom much is given, much is required," but they, as far as we can judge, have also, in all ages, caused the dismemberment of Christendom. It is my firm belief that if the Church had always practised what she taught, not one God-loving man would have left her.

But now to the point. Say that the sins and abuses of individuals in the Church were horrible beyond description ; say, if you like, that such sins and abuses exist now, what of that ? Does it interfere with God's Truth. Not that I can see. God secured the Truth from the beginning, and what was secured by God could not be affected by man, either by his studied endeavours, or by his evil carelessness. God placed inestimable gifts in His Church, and put them far beyond the reach of man's contamination. Let there be a devil's dance round these gifts, danced by the instruments and receptacles, the gifts remain the same for ever. It might have pleased God to have preserved His Truth, and to have distributed His precious gifts by other means than what He chose. He did choose *men* as His instruments, and what could we expect from men if not sin. Surely, even to our short-sighted eyes, the infinity of Divine Wisdom is shown by this choice of man in his natural sinful state, as the vessel of God's priceless gifts, else in days of cold faith, and cold love, might not the world have got to think that the gifts

proceeded from the instruments themselves instead of from the Divine Source of all things ?

If I knew nothing of History, and had merely had the nature of the Church explained to me, there are several things which I should naturally look for in her past ; I should look for nothing else, but that at the end of a certain long space of time I should find everything defiled in the Church that was defilable. Further, I should even expect that the Church would in some ways be more sinful than the rest of the world. All who believe in the reality of temptation by the spirit of evil, must feel that where most is to be gained by the sinner's fall, there is the Ancient Enemy most active. The spirit of evil knew how God's Truth would suffer in reputation by the sins of its guardians ; they were not more guarded against temptation than other men, so what wonder that they fell ! Woe and shame to *them* indeed that they fell ; but wherein was the truth and sanctity of their mission and office injured, in the eyes of those who have faith to pierce through clouds of dust and mire, and gaze straight at the Giver of the gifts ? Again, I should look in all ages of the Church for men who tore themselves from her Fold, and withal led blameless lives. Any believer in temptation would feel (if the Catholic Church is Christ's Church) that more of the world at large was to be won over to the tempter's cause by the pure lives of these individuals, than there would be if they led wicked lives. This has always been the case as far back as we can trace. Hear what St. Cyprian says even of his days, when the whole Christian Church was suffering cruel persecution ; when every man who called himself Christian had every inducement to cease from doing so, if the Faith had not a hold on him stronger than death. The saint says in an Epistle to Lucius, "The grand adversary makes his " attacks on none but the camp and the soldiers of Christ. He " thinks it not worth his while to meddle with heretics whom he " accounts himself sure of, having already fallen by their heresy."

However, extra temptation does not always mean a fall, for as in the days of St. Cyprian, the Catholics, though more tempted than the heretics, were nobler Christians than they, so

shall we find it to be the case in the later days of the Church. I will add parenthetically to what I said above, that it has never pleased the Most Highest to leave holiness of life to the enemies of His Church. These may have stood out in bold relief against the general corruption by the blamelessness of their lives, but as invariably as one sees these heretics of pure lives spring up wherever the Church seemed sunk in sin and corruption, just as surely does one see the noblest, most Christian champions of the Church spring up, with a holiness and self-forgetfulness, passing beyond words, the zealous, God-fearing lives of their Mother's adversaries, but this I will enlarge on afterwards.

I have said that if I knew nothing of the past, I should look for the Church to have been sinful, more sinful partly than her opponents, without my confidence that she is the means of preserving Christ's Truth and gifts being shaken. There are some things, however, which I should not look for, which if I found might shake my faith, and may be I should ask myself whether the means of grace and truth which I had thought Divine, might not be of human device after all. If, for one thing, I saw that owing to abuses, the nature of certain doctrines was changed ; if I found that certain doctrines were either suddenly or gradually modified or strengthened to suit the abuses relating to them, then I should begin to consider. I should not have put myself to the trouble of writing this Paper if I now entertained such a possibility. It is the very fact that the Church rolled in sin, and that yet her doctrine was untouched, that makes me believe it to be untouchable. Here, however, I am met by a difficulty, though not a personal one. That which I put as a possibility which would shake my faith, is maintained by many to be the case ; that is, in fact, how they account for the errors of doctrine which they affirm to have crept in. All such doctrines as they deny as unscriptural, such as the Real Presence, Purgatory, Absolution, the Invocation of Saints, they attribute to gradual abuses relating to them. All I have hitherto said has been to show that I believe all these doctrines, together with every other that the Church teaches, to have existed from the beginning ; but to

simplify matters I will stretch a point, and will fix their perfection where those most rabid against the Catholic Church fix it, in the seventh century, or at any time you like—the ninth or the eleventh century—it is all the same to me. The space between either of these dates and now, embraces all the worst epochs of abuse in the Church's History. Now, wherein does the doctrine of to-day differ from the doctrine of then? Wherein, therefore, has it suffered by the abuses that we all admit? Has the *doctrine* of indulgences suffered by the abuses relating to their traffic 300 years ago? I do not say, Is the doctrine true? but has it changed from what it was before then? Is it differently understood by Catholics now to what it was by Catholics in the Middle Ages? If absolution has been at times shamefully bought and sold, does that cause that penitents of to-day seek absolution with a different conception of its nature than they had some thousand years ago? As far as I can see, the worst abuses have left doctrines untouched. And if this is so, is it not strange? One would have thought that doctrines made by man, could and would be marred by man? and yet it seems that this is not the case, though all circumstances were favourable, for the Church was very powerful then and the world was very ignorant.

Again, there is another thing which I should not look for, and which I should be shocked to find, and which might make me doubt that she is the Christian Church. If, for instance, I found that the sins which alas have blackened her were authorised; if I found that a wicked life was inculcated on the world; if through the violence and hatred of the earlier times I found that it was *these* that were held up as Christian virtues; if I found that it was her Alexander VI., her Boniface VIII., that the Church most revered among the Popes; if it was those who had sinned against the precepts and spirit of the Gospel who were held up to the veneration of posterity, then I should gravely question the conclusion I have arrived at. But does any one who knows anything dare affirm this? There have never, thank God, been wanting holy ones in every age of the Church who have terribly denounced sin and corrup-

tion in the Church ; and have not the evil-doers in the Church always known that these spoke for Christ, and that *they* acted against Him ? There has never been a question or difficulty about it. The evil-doers may have continued in their sin, but they never justified it by saying that they were acting according to the teaching of the Christian Catholic Church. And who are they who are honoured by this Church, that some men call Satan's ? Who are raised to the Church's altars, but those who most terribly, most successfully, combated the works and ways of Satan, who, sparing neither high nor low, loudly proclaimed what Christianity was and ought to be, even though the very heads of the Church were included in the condemnation ? These holy ones who felt the blackness of the Church's sins much more acutely than we can now, *they* did not think that her truth was injured by the unholiness of its guardians ; *they* fully comprehended the length and breadth and depth of our Blessed Lord's wisdom when He said about the Pharisees, " All therefore that they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do ye not after their works, for they say and do not."—(Matthew xxiii. 3.)

It goes against me to write on the defensive like this. The great question to be answered is, not whether individuals have sullied the fair Church by their sins, but whether the Name and Fame of Christ have been known and honoured by her means, or have by her means been forgotten and dishonoured ; and surely on this point I might if I chose be very aggressive !

All through this Paper I have been more or less insisting on the point that Christ's cause has been most zealously fought for by the Church, so what can I do but repeat myself ? I cannot see how any one who looks at her history can deny that she has been Christ's champion throughout. From the earliest ages she fought and conquered those who denied what every Christian must consider essential to Christianity. Later, in the dark ages of violence and turbulence, she alone kept alive the sweet teachings of the Gospel, and by her fostering of them, wonderfully softened the semi-barbarity which otherwise would have infected the whole of society. And can any Christian say that

in these modern times she is not on Christ's side ? for all must begin to see what is the nature of those who are really against Him. It is the cry of some that she has done her work, that, though God-sent and very good for a certain length of time, her mission is over, and she has given way to a superior system.¹ This I cannot believe, for life is as strong in her as ever, and if ever there was a call for her, now is the time ! It seems to me that she is returning to her primitive business of denouncing all the Christianity-destroying doctrines which are floating about, and of holding up above the heads of the multitude the Standard of Christ, to which all may flock who will. Many assume the office of denouncing, but I feel as if she alone could do it with power ; many profess to hold up the Standard of Christ, but she alone can hold it up so as to be seen by the whole world !

To those who say that she has hindered Christianity by keeping away the Bible from the faithful, I would say that during 1500 years she alone kept the Bible alive ; that during that time all who would and could had access to it, and that *then* all its readers found its teaching to go hand in hand with that of the Church. From the second century upward she has, it is true, resisted those who set up its authority against that of the Church ; and when the time came that men set up a permanent system against her, based on the Bible, taking it as her rival, she, feeling herself to be God-sent, and resenting any disloyalty to her as disloyalty to her Lord, was cautious about its universal use. I am not, in this, yielding a point to the Church's enemies, for I maintain that now as ever she is the only faithful guardian of God's Written word. I believe if it were not for her one and widely known interpretation of the main truths in the Bible, the whole spirit of the Holy Book would have been by this time destroyed by the numberless criticisms and cavillings and appropriations of passages, and the bringing forward of certain parts to the detriment of others, of which it is the victim. May be the unlimited use of it might by this time have weakened the reverence due to it, as

¹ See note at the end.

the Holy Writ of God, if among some Christians in every country it were not regarded as the Book of God, too holy to be argued and quarrelled over by every chance person. Further, I believe that the days will come when, if faith in its Divine origin is maintained, it will be due to her.

To those who say that she has hindered Christianity, by fostering darkness and preventing civilization, I would say that as long as learning and civilization were encouraged for the sake of Christianity, she was ever at their head, but that when later they were taken by their promoters as an engine against Christianity, she—and how could she do otherwise—no longer marched at their head. She knew it was not learning and civilization that were anti-christian in themselves, but only by the bias given to them. She is ready to bide her time, for she being God-sent knows that truth cannot be injured by what *is*. She sits “calm as truth, patient as eternity,” while all contending theories float about, eagerly grasped at by men who wish evil to Christ’s cause, but once it is established that anything certainly *is*, when has she ever refused to recognize it? She would not be herself if she did, for she, the centre of faith, faith itself, knows that all that is true must be able to agree with the Divine Truth which she possesses. But what wonder that in her love for her Spouse and Lord, she would willingly turn away from all those questions which daily rob souls from Him whom she loves. She, let into the mysteries of God, sees men hurrying to and fro eager for any excuse to leave His cause, knowing much and thinking they know all, and too much to believe in Him; but what wonder that her interest is unawakened, for she alone knows enough of high things to know that we know nothing!

I see I am still writing on the defensive, but I will now finally leave that side, and take one which (if it were not for that strange binding hatred) ought to make the Church’s enemies act on the defensive, if they will not at once plead guilty.

I have been dwelling largely on the sins and corruptions of individuals, so I will now dwell for awhile on the holiness of

individuals, my object being to show that though, as I admitted above, sin abounded in the Church, such holiness existed along side of it as could not have existed, except where Christ was served in the best way.

I pass at once from the great sins to the great holiness, passing over all intermediate states. I started my condemnatory side with the declaration that it is my belief that sin and corruption did not ever poison the whole Church as many would have us to believe ; but still I will pass over the thoroughly Christian lives led by multitudes of ordinary people all through the history of the Catholic Church, of which one gets passing glimpses here and there. Many doubt that these existed, because they do not come across accounts of them in history ; but we do not go to camps and kings' courts for descriptions of the pious lives of ordinary Christians. My present business is with those holy individuals about whom everybody could know if they would.

Just as we have seen that in every age of the Church there have been Judases of the blackest dye, so now I hope to show that there have been always also Peters and Jameses and Johns of the brightest ; for there have been holy ones, so holy that I often think that if the enemies of the Church would but humble themselves sufficiently—would even take the trouble without humbling themselves—to examine the lives of the Saints, their opinion must change of the Church whose teaching alone produced such sons and daughters. However, the Saints are not known. The Church's sinners are known to everybody, but her Saints are unknown, so that in now treating of the holy ones of the Church, I feel as if I were treading on ground totally unknown by most outside her pale ; the most noble and glorious champions of Christ being only connected in their minds with some ridiculous incident, scarcely credited, no doubt, at the time of its invention, and most positively declared incredible and unauthentic by the Church. I cannot prove their holiness, only because I never knew them, any proof short of that I feel to be mine. I do not consider them holy only because the Church has pronounced them holy, I judge them from their lives written by

their own intimate friends, only less, and sometimes not less holy than themselves, and the truth of these lives I do not question more than I would that of any good man written by a friend in the present day. I do not question it at all, for the biographers, as if they foresaw that the days were to come when real holiness would be regarded as a mere legendary myth, appealed whenever they could to many witnesses for the verification of every smallest detail.

So it is my belief, judging from all sorts of evidences which I believe would be considered indisputable in a court of law, that the holiness of the Saints in the Catholic Church of all ages is of a kind and degree unknown to us, and which cannot well be even compared with what I, for one, was taught to look on as the attainable summit of human goodness. It seems hard to grasp, too good to be true, that such holiness, such victory over sin, could exist in mortal being; but let those study who will, and no doubt the same thing will happen to them as happened to me; a new heavens and a new earth will be, as it were, opened out before them, and their souls will swell with joy and thanksgiving, for having been given a life so full of grandeur and majesty, when they see what we God-bought souls are capable of. Their holiness is to *me* beyond questioning; so, before I dilate further on their holiness, I wish to examine, as far as human eyes can see, what were the causes of this superior holiness, and see whether it can be attributed to the fact of their being children of the Catholic Church.

The more I think on the matter, the more do I feel that one of the greatest havocs created by the Protestant Reformation was the nullifying of a large portion of the purposes of the Incarnation. The doctrine of Justification by Faith only (which has, thank God, been so inconsistently followed, and which, to be appreciated fully, and as it would have been in its effects if the teaching of 1500 years had not been too strong for it, must be looked at in those who follow it most closely, and with most spiritual fatalism;) the doctrine of Justification by Faith only, I say, has led, by even a partial adherence to it, to a breaking up into fragments of the harmonious and entire doctrine

of our salvation. It seems to me that the purpose of the Incarnation was threefold, but that the Reformers, and still more their close followers, have reduced this threefold cord to a single one. Many, thank God, are now struggling to restore one of the other blessed purposes and fruits to its proper place, but none, save Catholics, hold fast to the full, entire, threefold cord, which is, indeed, but one, but which if other than threefold would be broken and fragmentary. I believe it is because the Catholic Church alone holds on to Heaven by this unbroken chain that her Saints attain so near to Heaven.

It is indeed difficult to separate these three fruits of the Incarnation, for they hang together, and act one on the other; but as far as I can separate them I would call them:

1st. The Atonement: *i.e.*, the buying our peace with God, and salvation for such as would have it, once and for all by the Death of Christ.

2nd. The leaving us the Pattern of a Perfect Man, and the ennobling of our nature by taking it into the Divine Nature, showing us what God considers man is capable of, when united to God, and as we can each and all of us be to a certain extent, as hereafter shown. Towards this Pattern we are always to strive; not so as to procure salvation by our merits, but as a condition of salvation, and as a matter of loving allegiance, by which we are bound to mount as high as we can, so as to do honour to our state. Ours was always a high nature, having been made originally in the image of God; but for 1800 years it has had a new and untold dignity and majesty, having been doubly united to God by His having taken it into the Divine Nature.

3rd. That which I have been dwelling on principally in the course of this Paper, *i.e.*, the procuring the descent of the Holy Ghost as a ceaseless guide and continual Sanctifier of those means of grace, by which we renew in us the Divine Nature, and obtain the power of "working out our own salvation."

However, as I said before, it is impossible really to separate these three great fruits of the Incarnation, for they all

act together. The Atonement bought the other two, and means the other two; and those other two are but the means of profiting by the Atonement, which otherwise would avail us no more than a pardon would avail a condemned criminal, who in spite of pardon went and put his neck in the noose. And further, as the great Pattern set before us is not the pattern of what the natural man is capable of, but of what human nature is capable of, when united to the perfect Godly Nature; the only way that the pattern can be reached, as far as man can reach it, is by the third fruit of the Incarnation, by which the Divine Nature is renewed in us at will. The very indivisibility of these most precious fruits shows me how fragmentary any scheme of Christianity would be which ignores one or two of them.

Now Protestantism (properly so called) has established the first fruit as the only one, depressing the second, and rejecting the third. If God, indeed, meant us to sit down with folded hands, as it were, saved once and for all by the Blood of Christ, and having no grand striving through life, I would do it in spite of all the promptings of my soul, which make me feel that an effort can be made, and that why I do not reach the high aim within me, is because my heart is black, and not because the aim should not and cannot be reached. Few, however, really read salvation in the passive way I put it, for comparatively few are, thank God, perfectly consistent followers of their great foundation maxim, justification by faith only. Still, among Protestants (properly so called) there is an almost exclusive adherence to the first fruit of the Incarnation, and for this adherence I can find no support. It has terribly lowered the high standard of Christian holiness so often held up in the Gospels, which cannot have been held up without a purpose; and which, though impossible to be obeyed literally, must have been intended to show, that we must never cease from straining, *hopefully* and *faithfully*, after the highest perfection.¹ The

¹ Matt. v. 48; Luke vi. 40; 1 Peter i. 15, 16; 1 John iii. 6, 7; 2 Tim. ii. 19; Phil. ii. 15, iii. 12, 13, 14, 15; 1 John ii. 6, v. 15; James i. 4; 2 Peter iii. 14; Ep. i. 4; 2 Cor. vii. 1, xiii. 11; Col. i. 10, 22, 28, iv. 12.

servant whose pound gained ten pounds reached a higher perfection than he who gained five; yet he started even with the others. Maybe a hundred pounds was the final aim, and because he strove more ambitiously he attained more, and received a higher reward from his Lord. Some men are capable of a higher perfection than others, and who dare, by the allegiance he owes to Him who has made us in His image, and ennobled us by taking our nature into His, who dare say that he is not one of them?

The ignoring of the meaning of the Pattern Man set before us as our final aim has had this result, that apparently those who, in obedience to God's Will, strain towards inaccessible heights, have reached heights which to us appear inaccessible; while those who sit still and trust all to God, saying that no man, by effort, can reach a high state, and that no one degree of holiness is distinguishable from other holiness in our fallen nature (being thus ungrateful to Him, who died so as to raise our nature), are taken at their word, and die as they lived, blameless, maybe, but the children of dust and earth. Both die, bewailing that their souls cleave to the dust; and we believe the latter because the truth of their confession is so self-evident, while when the others, some of the great holy ones who have been among us from the days of the Apostles, when they die bewailing their sins, and saying that they are worthy of hell-fire, but for the goodness of God, we marvel at their humility, and recognise what light from heaven they must have had, thus to have appreciated the enormity of sin.

There are many, and the number increases, who see and appreciate the second great fruit of the Incarnation, (sometimes, may be to the detriment of the first), and when this is appreciated we have, to the outward eye, the whole harmony of the mystery of God made man complete. But is it complete? It may be beautiful; it may raise our desires and aims; it may, and if properly appreciated must, turn our whole lives to the one object of following our Master's footsteps; but is it complete? Would not the struggle be a mockery, and fill us with despair by its utter vanity? Prayer works wonders, but do we feel that the help

given us in answer to it would alone enable us to reach this high aim ? It seems to me, that if I fully appreciated the second fruit, I should long for, and turn round and look for, some God-sent means of renewing in me the Divine nature by which alone I could be like my Lord ; for some fountain of priceless riches where I could wash and clean me of my stains, and drink long and deep of Faith, Hope, and Charity. And what if I found this ready for me ? What if I found that the Divine source of this seven-mouthed fountain had never been doubted as far back as we could clearly trace ? Should not I turn to it, and grasp it, and cling to it, and see in it a worthy companion of the other two purposes of the Incarnation, perpetuating the first, and the only means of even attempting to profit by the second ?

As I said at starting, I believe that the Saints reached so near what we in our sinfulness are inclined to call perfection, because their souls embraced the whole measure of the Incarnation in all its workings and purposes, laying weight on each and all as heavily and lovingly and loyally as various sects lay on each separate one or on part of each one.

The first great doctrine of the Atonement was to them all in all. None more than they felt that they were of themselves worthless sinners, bought by the precious Blood of Christ. Their lives were spent in a holy sorrow on account of their sins ; not as some accuse them, in sorrow and anguish over the doubtfulness of their salvation, but in anguish that, being bought by the Lord they loved so well, sinfulness would cleave to them still. The austerities which are so usually put down to an endeavour to win salvation by self-torture, were but the natural expression of their deep loathing and contempt for the body, from which sin is inseparable ; added to which they were prompted to these austerities by a generous love and sorrow for the Life and Passion of their Lord, which made all but pain and sorrow a misery to them. They not only knew, and tearfully confessed, that they could of themselves do nothing, and were only saved from destruction by the grace of God ; but they were horror-struck by the uncleanness of their souls in the clean Presence of Heaven, in spite of the full help of the ever-blessed

Trinity. Thus the life cry of one and all—whether in words or no—was that of St. Francis on Mount Alvernia : “ My God, my God, how great Thou art,—how little am I,” and their death cry was : “ We are unprofitable servants ; we have done that which was our duty to do.” The strength of the love which filled their souls and ruled their lives could only spring from the sense that they were bought freely by Infinite Love : and the wonderful love which spurred them on towards perfection was of a depth we cannot understand. We complain of coldness, they complained of heat. Not only did their love for Christ make all personal love for human beings impossible, or rather, as weak compared with their love for Him, as might be our love for the birds of the air, compared with our deepest love for man or woman ; but it was a love at times so burning with the fire of Heaven, that it scorched their flesh-clogged souls, till in sweet agony they cried, “ Enough, Lord, no more ! no more ! ”

Still, however deeply they realised that they owed all to God, they did not leave all to Him, for they did not so read His Will. They knew that a certain work was allotted to them, and expected of them : and they worked hard to discover and fulfil this work, using freely of God’s help. “ Let us pray as if we had no help in ourselves ; let us labour as if there were no help for us in Heaven,” said St. Ignatius, 300 years ago, and he was but putting into words the maxim of the lives of the Saints. So we see that we have to glide imperceptibly from the way they appreciated the first fruit of the Incarnation to the way they appreciated the second. Their only desire on this earth was to act according to God’s will, most wonderfully subduing themselves to it, letting nothing—no labour, no love,—stand in the way of a complete harmony between His will and theirs, till at length no happiness was possible if they were conscious of even a repressed desire ajar with the Most High Will. This being so, they looked and saw that it was His Will that they should *hopefully* take His great example as their final aim. They knew that the God that cannot lie had bidden them to be perfect, even as He is perfect, and had declared that those who were perfect should be as their Master ; that He had told them by the mouth of His

Apostle Peter, that as He Who had called them is holy, so should they also be holy; and by St. John had simply asserted that all who hoped for salvation purified themselves even as He is pure, and that whosoever did righteousness, was righteous, as He is righteous. Seeing this to be His Will, and having but the one desire, *i.e.*, to conform their wills to His, believing by faith that all things are possible to him who believes, (Mark ix. 23), and that they could do all things through Christ who strengthened them (Phil. iv. 13); they, without questioning, launched themselves bravely on the road to perfection, with the same faithful hope and courage with which they walked through fire and sword to prove their faith, and with which they commanded death and sickness to obey them in the name of God. They were content with nothing short of the perfection of God made man; and great was the reward of their faith. When we think how multiform sin is, we are astonished to hear what were the sins most bitterly grieved over by the Saints, who certainly have never been accused of laxity in self-examination by even their worst enemies. We read that the sin which made St. Catherine of Siena most contrite throughout all her life, was having in early youth yielded for a brief interval to her mother's wish that she should pay some attention to her outward appearance; and later in her life she wept for days, and her view of Heaven was clouded because while talking on Divine matters in a Church, she looked round as her brother came in. St. Teresa said that she believed she would die if she committed a venial sin consciously, and yet who was fuller than she of what some would call torturing self-reproaches? These are but two instances out of many from the lives of the Saints who year after year could find no sin to accuse themselves of, and who yet always bitterly wept and bewailed their impurity; for mere absence of sin was but half way up the ladder they were climbing, and they wept so long as their sinful nature remained, which prevented them from seeing Him Whom they loved, face to face.

I know no greater proof of the holiness of the Saints, than their sorrow at their own unworthiness. We, looking at their

lives, turn giddy at the height they reached ; but the height above the mists of this earth was so great that it only served to show *them* sin more as it is, and reveal the real type of sinlessness so clearly, that the earthiness and corruption of their encumbered souls was more terrible pain to them than we can imagine, who can so little appreciate what sin is in the eyes of the All Pure ! I think that the height we see attained by earth-bound souls reveals to us more awfully than anything else could what the Sinless One was. We cannot understand these things. They are high, we cannot attain to them.

Catholics are condemned for not making a more universal use of the Bible. Now it seems to me that the spirit of the Bible was more acted up to by the Catholic Saints than it has ever been by people who know it by heart ; and these Saints are, let it be remembered, the type in practice of what the Catholic Church impresses on the world. They knew no training but hers ; what they were they owed to her teaching, and holy as were they, even they did not attain to the high standard held out by her. In the Catholic Church the imitation of Christ (in which the whole teaching of the Bible is summed up) is practical. She does not, maybe, inculcate the settling of controversial points out of it, but she takes every Christian precept and imprints it on her children at every turn of their lives. Her teaching is a digest of the whole sacred book. This, maybe, is a rash assertion to be made by one who only knows the Catholic Church by hearsay, but I make it on the strength of this : that those who have ever most closely followed the teaching of the Church are those who most closely followed the teaching of the Gospel ; and that it is these very followers of the Gospel that are held up as examples to the faithful. I do not know in which of the Christian virtues displayed in Christ's life the Saints most excelled ; whether in love towards God, or in love towards man ; whether in meekness, obedience, or humility ; whether in fearlessness or self-forgetfulness ; in self-denial, or in love of suffering for love's sake. Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, are to be found in the lives of the Saints. They lived on contemplation of

God and communion with Him, day and night. Whatever their occupation might be, their souls were gazing on Christ till His image was engraved on their hearts; and straight from the light of His countenance, by the unerring law of love, they learned all the great mysteries of our salvation. All was clear to them; they never had to seek their way. They sifted good from evil by the instinct of pure love, and would at last have found it as difficult to follow evil, as most of us find it to follow good. Nothing connected with our salvation was hard to understand, little as even they saw of it; the mysteries of grace and free will, self help and divine help, were spread before them in the light of Heaven; so that it is only by their lives that we can understand these mysteries at all. They had no difficulty in choosing their path of holiness, in combining the ceaseless worship of God which their souls demanded, with obedience to His commands concerning their duties on earth; for the very men who seemed to live on prayer and meditation were those who have left life works behind them, whether apostolical or theological, or works of active charity. While able to obey the first and greatest commandment, *i.e.*, to love God with their whole being, they had great love to spare with which to obey the second, *i.e.*, to love their neighbour; and, what is more, they were enabled in their illuminated souls to see that the second commandment is, as our Blessed Lord said, *like unto the first*. They lived on love for God and man, and their love was so mystical, that the very love wherewith they loved the God who bought the world by love, was extended to the love-bought man. It can never be said that the religion of the Saints was an empty one.

And how did they attain to this holiness? Was it by prayer and contemplation? Surely; but how did they obtain such power of prayer, such grace of contemplation? In a word,—by the third fruit of the Incarnation. They believed, as I believe, that God has placed on earth actual independent means of grace; and they drew deeply at these priceless wells. They believed in the awful Presence on the Altar, and that Presence was their only companion, whether in contemplation

or Communion. "I hunger," was St. Catherine's constant cry, if deprived of that Sacred Communion, and her soul was filled again when she received it. And as often did they have recourse to that other oft-repeated Sacrament, Penance. What wonder that, may be, daily cleansed from the sinful nature, and as often renewed with the Divine nature, they mounted to such giddy heights!

As I started by saying, I can bring forward no proof of the holiness of the Saints, for even if I were to quote and copy out the volumes from which I have gathered all I know of their lives, that, I fear, would be no proof, for these have always been at hand, and yet how little people believe in the Saints; so leaving all attempts at proof, I will merely ask my old leading question, "Why should all this not be?" I will ask whether from all we know of the great purpose of our salvation, it would not be expected that men should attain to greater perfection since the Incarnation than they did before? It sounds rude to say what I must say here, but it seems to me that Protestants, from their animosity to the Catholic Church, are obliged to maintain many strange theories, and none stranger than what I am about to enlarge on. From having, in maintenance of their very name and origin, to protest that the Christian world was in a state of darkness and error for so many centuries, and knowing that since the epoch of their own reformation there have been none among them worthy of comparison with the men of God before the Incarnation, they are obliged tacitly to declare that before Christ was revealed in the Flesh, before the Holy Ghost descended, in the days when the most enlightened had to grope their way upwards, a greater measure of holiness was attainable than now, when we are in the full blaze of the life and death of Christ! They make an exception in the favour of the Apostles, but they dare go no further, for they know how like the belief of the Apostles' successors was to that of the Catholic Church. Now I, and all those who believe in the holiness of Christian Saints as it has been recorded of them, find such a degree of holiness to be the very thing one would have expected to find. What more natural than that now,

in the full blaze of revelation, with God the Son and God the Holy Ghost made known to us, with the full shower of grace, and with all the faith, hope, and love of the New Testament to fill our souls, men should reach nearer to God than they did when all ideas of our salvation must have been dim and fragmentary? Those blessed Jewish Saints won their crowns by the faithful hope of *what was to be*, which made them long for God in the dry and thirsty land where no water was. What wonder that in this our era, when the dry and thirsty land is watered by streams of grace, that a faithful belief in *what has been* should lead to a more lofty soaring of souls towards Infinite Love? And if it was meant that Christians should be holier than the ancient Jews, where can we find even the claim to such superior holiness but in the Catholic Church? Oh! if the contrary of all this were true, it would be a bitter thought indeed! What Christian does not praise God that he is born since Christ died for us, and made noble our nature? And yet if men obtained a nearer view of God, and were able to lead a more perfect life before then than now, would there not be cause for us to moderate our joyful praise? Thank God, I do not believe this. I believe that the great Christian Saints may *at least* rank with the great Jewish Saints.

It is strange that those very people who deny the power of man to attain to any exceptional holiness are those who almost superstitiously look askance at any one who tries to make out that the Jewish Saints were in every point men like ourselves; so it is not the hopeless degradation of human nature which makes them doubt holiness. What then? Better for them that prejudice should make them doubt it, than a real belief that Christianity is an obstacle to holiness!

And now I feel in my own mind that this parallel between the Saints of the Old Testament and those of our era brings me to a subject on which it is not necessary to enter, but which I must mention, as it has borne no inconsiderable part in binding my faith to the Catholic Church; I mean the subject of post Apostolic Miracles. My faith ought not to require outward and visible signs, but to my cost I know that my faith is weak, and

has been weaker than it is; so that my gradually increasing, and now fast belief in the Miracles of the Saints, has in no small measure tended to confirm me in my belief in the Doctrines of the Saints. For if these Miracles are believable, and to be admitted as special marks of God's favour, and as special signs of sanctity, they prove to me that these servants of the Most Highest excelled all others in His service; that the way in which they served Him must have been more pleasing to Him than any other; and that the road they followed must have led straighter to Him than any other.

I cannot avoid believing in these Miracles, for it seems to me that those which are declared authentic rest on quite indisputable evidence. We all know, or do not know, the story of the Englishman at Rome, to whom a Cardinal showed the papers containing the evidence of the miracles of a certain Saint in process of canonization. "Ah!" said the gentleman, after reading them, "if all the Miracles of your Saints were as well authenticated as these, there would not be so much said against them!" To whom the Cardinal quietly replied, that the evidence had been rejected as insufficient. I do not think that hasty judgment concerning the authenticity of Miracles need be feared, insomuch that it has passed into a saying among the Italians, "It is next to a miracle to get a miracle proved at Rome."

For a long while, from prejudice, I suppose, much as I loved and lived in the lives of the Saints, I used to turn over the pages when I came to accounts of their Miracles, saying to myself that I wished that such things were not put in, as I thought they damaged the cause; but I gradually got to see that I could not thus comfortably turn my back on the Miracles, if I was ever to believe in the testimony of man or men.

What can one say when one reads circumstantial evidence of Miracles seen by friends of the Saint, reported by them, and verified by many witnesses, who though now long since dead, were alive when appealed to as verifiers, and of which the joint counter witness of one or two would have upset the whole case; and yet no one thus came forward in the cases that have been

declared proved. I have elsewhere collected together what few eye-witness testimonies I have personally come across, and it is only to these that I mean to allude, though, for my part, whenever I now read that a Miracle is declared authentic, I believe it without difficulty.

What can one say when one reads St. Augustine's account of the blind man being healed by the relics of SS. Gervasius and Protasius; when one reads the correspondence between St. Gregory the Great and St. Augustine of Canterbury, in which the miracles of the latter in England are alluded to; or of St. Bernard's account of the boy with the withered hand being cured by the body of St. Malachi of Ireland; or of St. Bernard's letter to Pope Eugenius, in which he refers to his own miracles; or of the diary of his miracles kept by his disciples on a journey which they took with him; or what shall we say of St. Bonaventure's recollection of having been healed when a child by St. Francis; or of Pope Alexander's public testimony to having been an eye-witness to the marks of St. Francis' Stigmata; or of Brother Elias' and other brothers' testimony to the same effect; or of Sister Cecilia's account of the raising to life of a young nobleman by St. Dominic, and other miracles which she saw; or of the numerous miracles of St. Catherine of Siena, related by Blessed Raymond of Capua and other eye-witnesses; to which be added that marvel, though I suppose not a miracle properly so called, recorded and declared authentic of so many Saints, that, I mean, of their being raised high in the air in an ecstacy of devotion, and which, to my knowledge, St. Teresa records of herself, Sister Cecilia of St. Dominic, and Blessed Stephen Manconi, and her own mother of St. Catherine, and which, to my mind, is the most beautifully symbolical miracle ever recorded.

There are but three courses to be taken regarding these post-Apostolic Miracles, either to disbelieve them blindly, to account for them, or to believe in them. To follow the first course, not only must we put down all the holy biographers of the Saints as liars; but we must persuade ourselves that the public at large was in league with them, and was so cunningly

suborned that there was no "inevitable traitor" among them. I think one must be in great straits to have recourse to the second course. I do not quite know how they would be accounted for. If men choose to attribute Miracles to mesmerism or some such agency, I can only say that it is strange that none but the holiest were able to perform them. If they are put down to an aberration of the mind in the beholders, I can only say that the chief actor, and he who was acted on, and the crowd of witnesses, were a large body to be subject to one and the same hallucination!

And how about the third course ? I myself find no difficulty in naturally following it. It is so strange to me that those who believe in the Miracles recorded in Holy Writ should put themselves into any contortions rather than believe in these later ones. I put aside the Miracles performed by Christ Himself (though, as all Miracles are necessarily performed by Him, I believe the exception is needless). I will even put aside the Miracles of the Apostles, to whom our Lord imparted immediate virtue (as if He were not now as able as then to impart immediate virtue). I will confine myself to the Miracles of the Old Testament, to which all believers in Revelation yield unquestioning belief. Certainly that they should be mentioned in the Holy Book gives a dignity to these Miracles, and, in the eyes of many, places them beyond a doubt, but still they were performed by men of a like nature to us, and who certainly did not perform them so as to be recorded in Scripture. What then was the object of these Miracles ? Was it not to prove the power of God and of His Name, to reveal His glory, and to cause Him to be honoured ? Is, then, His Name less powerful to work Miracles now that He has died for us, and sent His Spirit among us ? Or is His glory so appreciated, and is He so honoured, that it requires no more manifestation ? Or are Christians unworthy of a power which was given to the Jews ? It is not as if the Death of Christ had once and for all put an end to outward manifestations, for all admit that the Apostles wrought even more Miracles than the Ancient Prophets. No, it seems to me that those who admit the Miracles of the former era, and deny

those of ours, imply either that Christianity has degraded us in God's favour, or else that their belief in the possibility of God working Miracles by His servants is rather shaky. Once the reality is brought present to them by telling them that at this moment a holy man could make a cripple walk, or a blind man see, they demur, and say it is impossible. They will in fact only admit those ancient Miracles, because they are so remote that they can attach no reality to them. This is but another phase of what I complained of above, of that denial that as close a communion with God can be obtained now, in the full blaze of the Gospel, as there could be when men knew only in part that which we ourselves know only in part now.

It seems to me that there are most distinct promises held out in the Gospel, that all who have faith should be able to perform wonders; and I do not see why the promise should be confined to the Apostles. It is hard to believe that when Christ said, that whoever had faith as a grain of mustard seed should be able to remove mountains, He knew that such faith would only exist in His Church for the brief term of a man's life, and that all the after centuries would roll on faithless and weary. Jesus Christ raised men from the dead; but He promised to His followers that they should do greater things. Maybe, it is because I believe in the "greater things" than raising a dead body to life, which are being done hourly in the Church over the whole world, that I do not find these actual Miracles trying to the faith. For I find no difficulty in admitting them; I find no difficulty in believing in any Miracles. Just as they have always been considered, by the Church, inferior in worth to the holiness of the worker, so do I think them less wonderful! We know but little about anything; each new discovery makes us feel how little is known of even the physical things, and as for all that relates to the strange spiritual being inside each of us, we know nothing at all about that; and one feels in one's daily walk through life to be bordering on the marvellous; seeing nothing beyond the horizon, knowing nothing but what has been discovered. The whole of creation is wonderful, the whole of nature marvellous. I see the hand of the Creator in all, and

that it should please Him to present His marvels in an unusual form sometimes, I do not hesitate to believe. What seems strange to us, is, maybe, a matter of course elsewhere, for we know nothing. I can but see the same hand in the raising of a dead body, as I can see in the first giving of life to it. I see nothing more or less supernatural in His hushing a storm by the voice of man, than in His raising such a storm by means unseen. It seems to me that we live so surrounded by the Unseen, that it comes to me as more *natural* than not, that things should be influenced in what we call a supernatural way.

When I read of Saints having visions, I believe it. Not that we dare think that the Holy of Holies, or even, maybe, His glorified Saints show themselves as they are, but I see nothing beyond belief that God, by some veiled representation, should reveal Himself to the bodily eyes of His Saints on earth. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" was St. Paul's cry; so what wonder that, as the body of death becomes less of a barrier between the Saint and Heaven, the vision should become clearer. Do we not think that it was because St. Paul was holy, and near to God, that he was rapt into the third Heaven; and that St. John's purity was the means of the glorious Revelation being made to him? St. Stephen's holy eyes saw the Vision of Beauty before he died; it was there, but the murderers saw nothing. Peter's jailors were dully unconscious of the Angel's presence, but he saw and felt it. I believe that even to us, who can never, alas, hope to be Saints, if we had faith as a grain of mustard seed, the Heavenly host would be as apparent as it was to Elisha's servant.

I am not astonished if anything happens which gives me the sense that I am under the guidance of things unseen. I am full of awe, but not of wonder, if, as has often happened to me in any difficult bit of my life, I have, as St. Francis did, signed the Bible with the sign of the cross, and opened it, in the name of the Holy Trinity, on some passage exactly and strangely applicable to my case. Nor do such trifling guidances lower things unseen to one. One only feels to be acting in mysterious union with the unseen world, and all life becomes full and grand

at once. One walks through life with a sense of dignity and majesty, partakers of the Godly nature by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, whose stronghold on us and in us we can renew at will, by prayer and those means of grace, the calling down of which is a "greater thing" than raising a dead body to life; and with the whole host of heaven as our sweet guides, our holy friends, our most beautiful brothers.

I believe that the line concerning the Church that I have followed throughout this Paper would be gibberish to her blind enemies, who, even the educated, get hold of and ride to the death certain pet cries against her, caring to know nothing of what is the real nature of her claims, in virtue of which she teaches those doctrines about which they have pet cries. Such are the odds against which the Church has always had to fight, and it is only by a patience to which times and seasons are things of nought, that she can live down misrepresentations, and lay herself before her enemies as she is,—as such to stand or fall. She has risen above even worse ignorance and mistakes about her than are afloat now, so shall we despair? Never has she been more cruelly assailed by misrepresentations than at the two ends of her present existence. In the early days all the persecutions were caused by the idea that the Christians were a peace-disturbing, law-destroying community,—a religious sect, so corrupt in precept, so filthy in practice, as to be distinguished for it in the midst of the Rome of that time! Yet these were not wilful inventions, for each horrid calumny found its origin in the misconception of some Divine doctrine.

Men are more refined now in their misrepresentations, for the Church is now depicted as nothing worse than an idolatrous, usurping power, whose head seats himself in the place of God, even calling himself God; the chief characteristics of the system being, that it pays a worship to the Virgin Mary due only to God; that it has a *hocus pocus* way of selling to credulous people *remittances* of their sins on pieces of paper varying in value, according to the quantity or quality of their sins remitted; and that it encourages a general breach of the second and fourth com-

mandments ! Nothing will persuade them to think that the Catholic Church can be different to that Catholic Church which they have each and all fabricated to their own fancy. They shrink from all true books about her as polluting and poisonous, and mainly take their ideas of her from the versions of their own allies. Each takes some pet abuse (acknowledged as an abuse), and making an eyeglass of it, looks at the Church through it, and says that she is one big abuse. Nothing can change the opinion thus rashly formed : if she defends herself, she is a liar, or a deceiver, or (as say the most charitable) herself deceived !

I do not for one moment say that Catholics tolerate Protestants one whit more than Protestants tolerate Catholics ; but I will say this, that by the Catholic Church, Protestantism is condemned by its own accusation ; for that which it glories in, and from which it takes its name, is such a sin in the eyes of the Church that she need invent none worse ; while, reversing the question, I maintain that there is no hostile Protestant who will judge the Church on her own showing. "*She* says so and so, but it is not true," is the starting point of all their attacks. However, there is cause for hope even in this. If her adversaries hated her as they do, with a full knowledge of her claims and teaching, one might well despair of their hatred being ever turned to love ; but is there not a hope that if they expend all their hatred on this creation of their brains, they will have no more to spend on the real thing, if it ever appears to them ? One may, indeed, say "*if* ;" for how can she be ever shown in her true light to those who will not look ? Lay before them the doctrine of Divine Tradition, the very foundation of the Church, and which, if fully believed, must bring a belief in every doctrine that she teaches ; expound it by the hour, and at the end their only comment will most probably be, that it is a blasphemous idea (fortunately not believed by any educated Catholic), that any set of men should think themselves able to sit down, and invent new doctrines. Then, if you have the patience, you might again launch into long disquisitions, how that the Church maintains that no doctrine is invented, and that her very chiefest of claims is that she is for ever surely guided by

the Holy Ghost, and that Truth has been, and is, and always will be, infallibly lodged and guarded by Him. Then sure enough there will be an interruption here ! " You are wandering " from the question ; let us argue sensibly ; a mere child could " tell that all that is impossible." " We all know that this man " is a sinner."

I would then only ask one question, and I ask it here : Is it not strange, looking dispassionately at the whole history of the Church, that she should never have committed a blunder ? should never, in spite of herself, have promulgated a startling new doctrine ? I defy you to find one doctrine introduced with a hard edge ; I defy you to trace the actual beginning of any Catholic doctrine. All you can say is, that the whole system of Catholic Doctrine has been evenly and equally developed from the beginning until now ; not one jarr, not one breach of harmony has ever taken place ; it is as if the whole universe had been brought nearer to us, each star keeping its relative distance and brilliancy ; and I believe men could move the one about as easily as they could move the other. Then I should point out finally to these blind adversaries, that those doctrines which they hold, and which the Catholic Church holds as well, and which even they admit she holds as firmly as they do, *these* have all been preserved and defined on just the same system as the others ; and yet no blunder has ever occurred in *them*.

I have not touched as yet on any of the Catholic doctrines individually, nor on how my convictions stand concerning them. I believe them all, I believe them because the Church teaches them, and I do not see how I could do otherwise, though such as do as I have done, are commonly said to be forcing their belief, so that it can have no reality. I cannot see this. Once I believe her who speaks to be unerringly true, must it not necessarily follow that I should believe what she says ? There might, I suppose, be some doctrine, so impossible to be believed by me, that it would upset my belief in the Church's Truth, but it is hard to suppose such a doctrine ; for it would require much to make an individual set his own personal judgment against this

system of such long and firm standing. Is she, who seems so right on all other points, to be suddenly wrong, because she teaches something I find it hard to accept ? Is it not more likely the mistake is on my side ? But then I never can draw this distinction between what is believable and what is not. If we are only to believe what we see and know, or what others see and know, our belief must stop at this world and its matters : but if we once admit that our soul is such that it *will* believe, however vaguely, in things that nobody knows anything about, I do not see where the limit can be put, simply because we know nothing. If we believe in the Incarnation, what shall tell us that the Presence in the Eucharist is a myth ? If we believe in the Resurrection of the dead, why should the Communion of Saints be incredible ? If we believe that we shall hereafter be rewarded or punished, why should we not be purified ? Is it not an assumption that we know a great deal more about things unseen than it is given us to know, if we thus attempt to divide the mysteries of God into things credible, and things incredible ?

I will not enumerate or enlarge on the several Catholic doctrines, but still there are two I must enlarge on, for both have played no small part in bringing me to where I am now ; for the immediate echo they both found in my soul gave, no doubt, great substance and reality to my belief in the Truth of the Church. It was as if I had had a crave for them all my life, which was suddenly satisfied.

To the doctrine of the Real Presence in the Eucharist I owe my faith. True, it was my vague conviction of the Divine origin of the Church which first spurred me on to seek and see how much I could find out about her ; but it was owing to the blessed Presence in the Eucharist that my thoughts were turned towards her at all. I attribute the feeling of awe which always came over me in Catholic churches abroad to the Presence that was there, though I did not know it. Even at Notre Dame at Paris (the first Catholic church I was ever in, in my life), the awe seized me. At Chambéry, the awe was wonderfully increased ; at St. Petronio at Bologna, I could scarcely contain myself ; and in every Catholic church I have ever been in since

the same awe has had possession of me. The feeling was such that had I been more impulsive, I must then and there have fallen on my knees each time, and as it was, I had recourse to every conceivable device, and often successfully, to escape from observation, so that I might kneel down. So long as I was abroad, I did not know to what to attribute this strange feeling, or rather I attributed it to the sanctity of a place set apart for continual worship; and to the absence of such continual use I attributed the proportionate chill and horror which came over me in a church unused or under repair. This last feeling was so strong, that to say a thing was like an unused church became with me, to mean that it overwhelmed me by its desolation. It was only after my return to England that I began to suspect what was the real cause of this devotional awe; I was, however, so afraid of being superstitious, that for a long time I combated this explanation of it. It is only quite lately that I have fully acknowledged that It, and It only was the cause; for I have read, only the other day, that this mystical feeling of devotional awe is quite a common germ of conversion. Many outside the Church's Fold have entered a Catholic place of worship for the first time, and have felt this mysterious awe bend their knees, and after its having been repeated two or three times, have searched for, and found its cause, and, more generous than I, have at once yielded their faith to the Catholic Church.

Though it was so long before I explained this feeling by the doctrine of the Real Presence, the doctrine itself had had a fast hold on me from almost the very beginning; for once the idea of the Divine origin of the Church struck me, a ready belief in the Real Presence followed (and one thing followed after another very quickly then), and I premeditatedly knelt at the Elevation when I was at Rome. I flew to the belief, for, as I said above, it seemed to fill a want which had, unknown, existed always within me. The doctrine seemed so Divine, and to give such a clue to everything relating to our communion with God, that had I been killed for it, I could not have disbelieved it. Through all my vacillations during the last five years, this has kept fast hold

on me, and, please God, will to the end. My love for it, and my belief in it increases, and if ever I surmount all obstacles, and rest at last in the Catholic Church, it will be devotion to this doctrine which will carry me over the obstacles, just as it is now what makes the attraction so hard to *resist*.¹

As regards the other Doctrine, *i.e.*, that of Purgatory, which found such an immediate echo in my soul, and made so much easy to me that had been difficult; I believe that all through my life I have unconsciously believed in a little Purgatory of my own. I do not know what Purgatory is, but I believe in it with a strength beyond words. I will not enter into what I consider proofs of the truth of my belief, but I merely wish to sketch the reasons why the doctrine finds an echo within me, and is to me so easy to believe, so difficult to disbelieve.

I do not know which is, in its way, most sublimely awful, the doctrine that there is a heaven, or the doctrine that there is a hell; that we shall one day always see God, or that we shall never see Him. Believing in revelation, I am forced to believe both, but so terribly awful are they, that we dare not trifle with them, or attempt to understand them. God forbid that I should attempt to understand them, but still in the vagueness of my own soul, all my ideas of the future centre on the Vision of God. Now there are such countless numbers of sin-stained souls which leave this world, which we cannot think are everlastingly condemned, and yet it makes one shudder almost as much to think that they are admitted at once to gaze eternally on our infinite Lord and Love, on the King in His Beauty. Not only do we shrink from thinking them fit for such a worship, but we must feel, they themselves would feel, that they could not find a full reward in perfect sinlessness. Think how much of the happiness of ordinary souls is inseparable from one or more grains of sinfulness, for which none would condemn them to the awful place. Think how even the bliss of our spiritual joys is mixed up with the effects of our sinful nature, such as the sweet pain of a humble, loving repentance; the sense of being guarded from harm by the Everlasting Arms beneath us; of casting the

¹ And this was even before I went abroad in the Summer of 1869.

whole care of our whole lives on Him ; and even, in our best moments, the passionate sorrow for the sorrow of our Lord ; and yet none of these could exist if there were no repentance, no evil, no cares, no sorrow ! Could we, I wonder, find a full eternal reward in the pure, calm, passionless light and love of heaven ? Could we, as we are, gaze eternally on Him without being scorched by it ? I think most of us are too sin-stained. I should long for a "keen and sweet expiation" to cleanse away, not only my sins, but my sinful nature, so as to make me worthy of such worship, and make me able to bear the sight of Him, whose presence we have all felt, but whom we have never seen.

And now my task is almost done. Not quite, however, yet. I cannot conclude this paper without touching on one great side of the question, which I have all the way through purposely and scrupulously avoided touching on : I mean all that relates to the inner evidences of faith, the effects of prayer, and all the bright glimpses that lighten up our life. I could not leave this side unmentioned, for who that believes in communion with the unseen, can doubt that it must tell strongly one way or the other on one's belief. Some might put no trust in its effects, but to me all that great side of one's life is so evidently the working of the unseen within one, that I cannot but bow my head to it as such, and feel that no reasoning is complete or worth anything which is not backed by these strange, luminous, inner evidences. I look on all arguments and reasons as so many means of exposing the probability of a thing, but I look for light from heaven as the only thing that can give any certainty. Some might trust entirely to these inner evidences, but that I dare not do, for there is so much of a person's self mixed up with upper influences. By some strange law each man is able candidly to base his own particular beliefs on the inner evidences of faith, and, as is natural, each man thinks his own inner evidences clearer than anybody else's. It is the evident universality of this test that has prevented me from ever alluding to inner mystical belief as an argument in favour of my own convictions, though I have never forgotten that side for one moment. Now,

however, as supplementary to what I have written, I wish to say a word or two about this side. I know a great deal about my own inner evidences of faith, and nothing at all about anybody else's, so it is but natural that I should think them of no small importance.

I have a strong belief in the effects of prayer. Different people, of course, feel differently about the great Unseen ; I have long had a strange, irresistible (even if resisted) realization of the Divine Presence : as I pray I have a certainty that what my lips utter the great God hears. That my prayers fall on empty, disregarding space, would be harder for me to believe than that One hears them who can answer them. It is all a great mystery, but such is my belief. What I pray for I sit and wait to receive, or not to receive, as the case may be : but I do not sit and wait to be, as it were, deceived, for I believe in the mercy of God ; so that if I pray for light and truth, I do not expect darkness and delusion. This is what is, I suppose, felt by all people who pray, but as I am only concerned with myself, I lay this before myself.

I have loved God a little for nearly five years now, and in proportion as I love Him, I, of course, try to do His will. My long march after truth has been with the view of doing His will, so at every step I have asked for help and light, and the answer that has come has been a stronger and stronger belief in the Catholic Faith. At the times, during the last five years, when my love for God has been coldest, and my prayers for light neglected or suspended, either from fear of facing the light, or from indifference to the will of God, then my views of the Catholic Church have been cloudy. As my love and my prayers have been warmer, she has shone out brightly and clearly as my only aim. At the most solemn moments of my life—above all now, just after the most solemn moment in my whole life, while I feel the Everlasting Arms fold me closer and closer, when I am almost regardless of the love I have lost, because of the wonderful love that I feel encircling me, there stands the Holy Catholic Church resplendent and glorious to my eyes, giving a meaning to everything seen and unseen, appearing as the great natural

result of the Life and Death of Him in whom just now I feel my whole being absorbed. But it is so hard—so hard that it is beyond me—to think that at this moment I am loving and clinging to Him, my Lord, through a lie!

Why am I not a Catholic? Why not indeed? If only myself were concerned I should be one. I would risk all, even the chance of being mistaken, and much more, all personal inconveniences, for I *feel* that in that road lies my obedience to Him; and I would so willingly obey Him. But more than myself is concerned, and that makes a coward of me; all power of risk leaves me, and I look for certainty, clinging fondly to the shadow, that I do not *know* this to be the Truth, and I tell myself all day long that I have no right to put any one to any pain, by following what *is*, after all, only my own judgment. But there, let that be! For the sake of the fragment of peace that remains to me, do not let me urge my conscience to a final answer. The blind will, I know, be torn from my eyes, just as all other blinds have been taken away. For two years and a half I fought my conscience more or less successfully, for I ran away from the conviction of the inevitable truth of the Catholic Church as soon as it appeared too vivid. In spite of running away, it found me out, and for nearly two years I have been obliged to own to myself that my conscience is not clear. Latterly the truth of the Church has become so vivid, and the prospect of obedience to God in this matter so painful, that for the first time I honestly wish the Catholic Church not to be as true as I think her to be; and yet her truth blinds me now as it has never done before. Still, however, it is true that I do not *know*. Who does? We never shall know in this life, else what would faith mean?

But I will face the matter in this book. I own that it is a marvel to me how I can keep myself out of the Catholic Church, and sometimes the effort that it costs me makes me hopeful that some day I shall not be so weak to do the will of God as this hesitation generally makes me fear. I have learnt by experience that my love for God is stronger than any other love I have, and it is hourly pain to me not to obey His will in this. I dread no trouble for myself, for I believe that life (never mind what rough

line it took) would be absolutely easier if one's will were in nothing ajar with the Divine will. And further, my own desires draw me into the Catholic Church, so that I have my own will to resist as well, for I all day long strain lovingly after her, with a sick longing, as after something that would give me rest and peace. When I see that one refuge in the middle of the storm, filled with priceless gifts, that I can get nowhere else, and for which I starve, it comes to me as a boon too great to be resisted. I see our pitiful Lord's tender mercy so heartrendingly when I look at it, that it seems almost past bearing to neglect this which cost we all know what to procure.

And yet in this sick longing for the Church lies the whole mystery of my resistance. It is the very feeling of what a boon I am rejecting that makes me hesitate before sacrificing the happiness of another to the grasping of it. I long so for it that I almost forget that I ought to have it; I feel that I am so thwarting my own desires, that I do not properly realise that I am disobeying God's will. What I see in the Church is a refuge put into the world by a merciful God, to be rejected at a sacrifice of our own happiness, much more clearly than as a test of obedience, put into the world by God to be rejected at peril of His anger. I see the boon so strongly that I am apt to forget the duty. I feel this so strongly that I have never yet been able to arrive at condemning anybody for what they reject. I see the *right* clearly; but I have never yet been able to say what the *wrong* is, though I know that much is not right. Of course I feel this most strongly about what is Christian and what is not Christian; but I feel it very strongly about what is in the Church and what is out of the Church. In both cases I see which side I call the right; but if *the wrong* means sinning against God, I find it hard to set any one down on it, for they seem to be more sinning against themselves. Sinning against God involves His anger, and it is hard for me to realise that His anger is let loose on those who thus shut themselves out from happiness, any more than that a father would beat his child for refusing some meal of dainties prepared for it. I feel the whole world outside the Church (and myself among the number)

so to be pitied, that I often forget that I am to be blamed. This is the only reason (and a lame enough reason it is) that I can give for why, and in fact the only way I can account for why, in spite of everything, I do not at once join myself to the Church.

There are some who say that were it quite established that the Catholic Church is just what she claims to be, I need not leave all and follow her. God knows. If she was established as what she claims to be, it seems to me that she was established for the one purpose that Christians should belong to her. Such must have been the will of God, and where Christ wills a Christian to be, there a Christian ought to be, and nowhere else. It is in this light that I try to view my joining, or not joining, the Catholic Church. I may not take into consideration any personal comfort and help ; I may not think of the joy of finding half the world my brothers and sisters, so that I might feel one with the world, instead of one against it, and of finding for the first time true friends with whom I could be heart to heart, soul to soul ; I may not think that all my faith, hope, and love being there, I should be more *whole* if I were there too ; I may not even think that I should be better if I were once at peace, and could follow my upward course with no thought about choosing my way ; I may not dwell on, or crave for, those priceless gifts of Heaven, to be found there and there only ; I may not, perhaps, yield to the longing to rush into *His* Presence, to go to where, and where only, I can receive Him into my very nature, so as to become one with Him. It is this that urges me on most resistlessly, but I may not think even of this, for what is it but a desire ? I may and must (and this I must do) only think whether it be the will of God that I should leave all and follow Him. What sign, what certainty shall I wait for ? Did Peter and the others *know* that it was the God of Heaven Whom they obeyed when He said, "Follow me" ?

NOTE.

PAGE 92. In the body of this Paper I merely touched on that view which some take of the subject, the theory of which is, that there was a time when Catholicism was the true and right form of Christianity, but that that time has passed away ; and that though it may still be all very well in its way, yet a new, more fit, more advanced form has taken its place. Are not the people who hold and urge this theory, generally those who, whether openly or covertly, hold also the theory that just as Catholicism is but a supersedable form of Christianity, so is Christianity but a supersedable form of religion, which did, and maybe is still doing, its work in the world, but is to give way to a form more advanced and suited to the times ? Can this be true, I ask, of either Christianity or Catholicism ? In the body of this Paper I always set aside any doubt of the everlasting Truth of Christianity, as a starting-point ; but in this case I will include it in the examination, for the strongly-marked parallel that, to my mind, there is between the two, gives force to what I consider the strong counter-argument to the whole theory.

I asked whether this theory was tenable, and I will begin my answer by putting another question. What sort of things are they which are able to be superseded ? Are they not *systems* ? Can facts, tangible realities be superseded ? No, they can be forgotten, ignored, and if improvable, they can be improved on ; but a thing that is can never be swept away. So then, if Christianity ever was true, it cannot be swept away or superseded. They that maintain that it can, admit that for a certain time, over a certain part of the globe, it was the form of all forms of religion, and did its work as none other could. They must then admit that it was true for a time, for I cannot fancy that such as maintain this theory could bestow their unqualified admiration and approval on what, if a lie at all, was the most awful, stupendous lie ever known. So if true for a time, is it not of a nature that it must be true for ever ? When I look at a crucifix, I feel that if what it represents be true, it must be the great truth of the world's history. If the great God of Heaven who made the world, and whose the world is, if He did become man, and did die that death for us, it must have been necessary for this little world, and at no one period of its history more than at another could it do without it, or lawfully ignore it. As to the

possibility of this great awful Truth yielding to something more advanced, you must prove that such is greater and more awful, before my soul will admit it. For the world to be so advanced, that such a Truth is beneath it, either the world must be great indeed, or else God must be small indeed !

And Catholicism, is she only a supersedable system, or are there certain facts inseparable from her existence which must be swept away and reversed before she could be superseded ? I do not enter here into what I dwelt fully on above, I mean as to the question whether her claims are such, that if not true, she must be a hideous lie, so that those who admit she was ever the right form of Christianity must (unless they love a lie), admit that for such a time she was true. My present business is with this theory, which many hold, that she rightly served the purposes of God and of the world for a time, but that though now all very well in her way, a more advanced and suitable system has superseded hers, just as hers superseded the Jewish system. But where is the parallel ? What fact, what tangible reality was annulled when the Jewish law was done away with ? Regulations and customs in abundance were done away with, but where was the *reality* which men rightly believed in as true, which became untrue under the new dispensation ? The secret of the maintenance of this theory is that those who hold it know but little about the Catholic Church and her claims ; they climb to what they call a height, and looking down at her as unconcerned spectators, they take a bird's-eye view of her through their own spectacles. They review the past history of this thing which calls itself, and which they also for the sake of custom and convenience call, a Church. Church government is the point they seize hold of as most clearly and visibly revealed in the broad history, and as for her spiritual invisible claims, after throwing a glance at them as mere extras, instead of as the ground of her existence, they discard them as the temporary, and, as such, fit expressions of the world's everlasting worship. They do not look at them fixedly enough to see that they involve certain grave realities, which must be false if not true, and that if the mere temporary expressions of anything, they are the expressions of blasphemy and idolatry. They see from their eminence, the fierce passions of men kept in bounds by the Church's spiritual authority, helped by these "expressions of the time ;" they see fiends turned into saints by her influence ; and the brutal parts of men struck and subdued by the (what they call) grotesquely supersensuous lives of her holy ones. It is, I believe, just because the spiritual authority and government of the Church so benefited the world at the darker period of its existence, that these refined critics of the nineteenth century maintain that she could not benefit *them* ; and that therefore she had ceased to be true. This vague, romantic Church system, the result of their bird's-eye examination, might easily yield to another system suited to the age, and has yielded ; but what cannot yield, or be annulled until God recalls

the word that established them, are those claims which they call the passing expressions of the age, but which I maintain to be of such a nature that if not real they must be a delusion, if not true, must be false. Let them remember that they said she was true and right for a time, it is I who suggest she was false and wrong. Their very souls would loathe her if they recognised in her a tissue of blasphemous carnal lies. So they admit, do they, that for a time the Holy Ghost taught her infallibly ; that what she declared true could not be false ; that she really remitted and retained sins ; that at various stages of a man's life she did impart special virtue to him ; and that she could and did call down the God of Heaven to her Altars, so that He always dwelt among the faithful, and through her bestowed Himself upon them, entering into their very hearts and natures ? Now are these mere quaint expressions of a certain stage of the human mind, are they mere types and shadows, a system to be superseded by a more advanced system, or are they substantial realities, actual benefits bought by Christ's Blood, and bequeathed to us at His death to help us through our pilgrimage ? Were they such that, if what they claimed to be, they could be noiselessly superseded ? There is the great difficulty, for though God of course could take away the gifts He gave, I cannot see how they could, by all we know of His Love and Justice, be taken away without any preparation ? There was, remember, if these were removed, one memorable day when realities suddenly became delusions, and truths became lies ; when, at one hour, the man who received absolution received it really ; when he bowed himself before the altar, bowed before God there present ; when he received communion really and truly received Christ into His very nature : and on this same day a little later, another man received the form of absolution only, bowed before an empty Altar, received a wafer over which a vain form of words had been repeated ; for without his knowledge all had been changed a little while before, and what had been real till then, was to be delusion for evermore ?

Why do I write such folly ? Why do I describe a state of things which could never have been, and which I venture to say no one ever did believe to have existed. I do not for one moment believe that those who say that Catholicism was true for a time and has been superseded, think that she was ever true, even for a time ; nor do they admit the reality of any one of her sacred claims, either that she taught infallibly, or imparted actual grace through the sacraments, some hundreds of years ago, any more than that she does so now. They believe that she teaches a lie now, and they believe that she taught a lie then, though it does not come into their creed to call anything untruth, any more than it does to call anything truth. So, after all, with these as with other antagonists of the Church, the heads of the argument lie in a nutshell : "If the Catholic claims are not right and true, then they are wrong and untrue : which of the two do probability

and history lead us to think her?" If any person candidly and honestly believed her to be true some centuries ago, be sure he must believe the same of her now.

And wherein (I ask this question of those *Christians* who maintain this theory of supersedence) has Christianity profited by the change of system, if change of system there has been? The first step towards seeing if anything has lost or gained by a measure is to see clearly what is the final aim of that thing, so as to see whether it is nearer to or farther from it than it was. So I ask what is the aim of Christianity? Is it not union, the perfection of love, up to which those two lesser (though scarcely lesser) sisters, Faith and Hope, are to lead us? Now, which system would lead most quickly and surely to this end, supposing each to be true in its turn? The Church taught infallibly once; is the present state of wandering wonderment a step in advance or the contrary? Let us remember that the time of our pilgrimage is very short, and our final and possible aim is very high, so which system conduces most to our union with Christ,—that which enables Christians to start with a sure hope and sure faith, and spend all their days till they die in climbing nearer to Him, so that when they die they can dread nothing, wonder nothing, but simply receive their sight, and behold Him in whom unseen they lived; or is that system better which compels each Christian to spend his best devotion and ardour in feeling for and desperately clinging to Christ, sustaining a life-long, time-wasting effort to hope and believe in Him, so that they may love Him. Is this a closer means of union than the other, or would not a looker-on say rather that they cast a veil over the very Object of union?

And those precious gifts of God, which the Church used to deal out, what has the new system given in exchange for them, to bring us nearer to our Lord than they did? The actual grace of God used to flow through these channels; what straighter channel has been revealed? There was a time when all those Christians whose one desire was to see Christ face to face could patiently toil to the end of their pilgrimage, for Christ dwelt among them; they who were sick with love and longing for Him, could be healed for a time, for He dwelt in them, and gave His very nature to them, so that they were as one with Him as their fallen state allowed. And what has been given instead? Nothing at all! This wonderful life-giving mystery is, say they, behind the age. The whole system, with all its approaches to the God of our worship, and means of an almost awful union, and which still, thanks be to God, flourishes throughout the length and breadth of this world, is such that it cannot suit the spirit of these later ages! Maybe, maybe—but is this the fault of the System or of the Age?

POSTSCRIPT.

I WROTE the foregoing pages nearly four years before I at last, by the grace of God, found peace and joy in the Catholic Church.

Having, as I say in them, intended them solely for my own use, I found on looking over them before committing them to print, that there were many things which I would gladly change. They bear on their face that they are the words of one still in outer darkness, and I longed to throw upon them the light of the Catholic Faith. This very wish restrained my hand. If these pages have any interest or value, it is just because they are the words of one avowedly in the dark, who yet by God's mercy caught sight of some bright rays, and was by them guided into His glorious light. This they would be no longer were I, a Catholic, to touch them. It is true that my view of God's Truth, as there described, may be often hazy, and sometimes even crooked, but as I wrote so I leave it, for it was by that way that God led me, and by no other. The half truths I divined at turned into whole truths in His hands, and what I saw crookedly He has made straight. What is true in these pages was His work in my soul, and what is not wholly true was my misinterpretation of His guidance. The state of mind in which I wrote was a peculiar one, which I cannot reproduce, and can-

not even always recall, but the memory of it is almost sacred to me, just because it was the way God chose to lead me into the blessed fold of His Church, and show her to me as she is—show her, that is, as what in the old dim days I divined and hoped her to be, only so much more beautiful, so much more worthy of her Maker, as is the glorious sunlight looked at with unclouded eye, than the same glorious sunlight looked at through a thick veil.

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